

Organizing Notes

People, Power & Change

Week 1

Introduction

The first question an organizer asks is not “what is my issue” but “who are my *people*”? Identify the *people* whom you hope to organize, your *constituency*. What are their values, their interests, their resources, and, in particular, their challenges? Why might they want or need to organize? Do they live in a particular neighborhood? Do they do a certain kind of work? Do they share particular concerns such as parents, elders, young people? Do they share common values, such as preserving the environment? Why do they care? How do you know? Have you talked with them? Although the source of your constituency’s concern may be local, regional, national or even global, because all organizing is locally rooted, sometimes we link organized constituencies together in coordinated campaigns. Sometimes people in one place, like South Africa during the struggle against Apartheid, may organize in one way (strikes, civil disobedience) while supporters of that struggle around the world may organize in other way (boycotts, political pressure, etc.)

The second question an organizer asks is what kind of change do they need? What problems do they face? What challenges? Is their neighborhood deteriorating? Are their wages not keeping pace with the cost of living? Are their young people victims of official or unofficial gun violence? Are they morally outraged by the trafficking of young women? Is their children’s future at risk due to climate change? How would their world look if the problem were solved? Why hasn’t it been solved? What would it take to solve the problem?

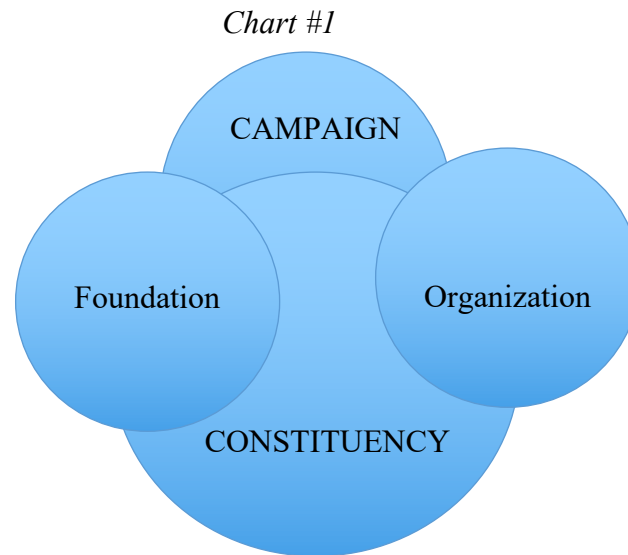
The third question an organizer asks is not “how can I solve their problem for them” but “how can I enable them to work together to turn the resources they have into the power they need to achieve the change they want?”

You will need to map the power to begin finding answers to these questions: in addition to your constituency, what other actors may have a stake in the problem? What are their interests and resources? Who is responsible for the problem? Who holds the resources that might solve it? Whose interests might oppose solving it? Whose interests might be allied? Whose interests might be competitive? Whose interests might be in collaboration? And whose resources are relevant even if their interests are not clear: media, courts, the public, etc.

Once you've mapped the power, based on analysis of the change needed, you must ask how your constituency could use their resources to create the power it needs to achieve that change: a theory of change. Could they collaborate to combine their resources to create enough "power with" each other to solve the problem: like forming a cooperative day care or organizing a credit union? Or does someone else have "power over" your constituency because they hold resources needed to solve the problem: a property owner, a bank, a public official, and an employer. Could your constituency collaborate to use their own resources in ways to affect that other person's interests enough to give them an interest in using their resources the way your constituency wants: like raising wages, passing a law, cleaning up their pollution, reducing the rent?

Based on this analysis decide on a strategic goal (specific, visible, plausible) on which to focus your effort; e.g., desegregating the busses, passing a local minimum wage ordinance, achieving union recognition, changing hiring practices, changing school text books, closing the local planned parenthood clinic, creating a new course, reallocating funding, etc. A strategic goal not only allows you to focus your efforts, but will also allow your constituency to leverage its resources, to build its capacity, and to motivate participation. Your "mountain top" or ultimate goal may be to stop gun violence in America, for example, but, given your circumstances, what more limited but strategic goal can you focus on that can contribute to building the power you will need to achieve you ultimate goal? To achieve your strategic goal you need to decide on the tactics you will use and sequence them as a campaign. Campaigns unfold over time with a rhythm that slowly builds a foundation, begins with a kick off, gathers gradual momentum with preliminary peaks, culminates in a climax when a campaign is won or lost, and then achieves resolution (Chart #7).

In this class you will conduct a campaign by organizing your constituency. As Chart 1 shows, organizing is about enabling a constituency to develop the power it needs to assert its interests effectively, not only now, but also in the future. That's how power shifts. Organizers begin by building a *foundation* within their constituency. This usually requires many one on one meetings to learn people's concerns, discern the sources of the real problems, figure out the power dynamics, and identify, recruit and develop the leadership of a campaign. A *campaign* is a process through which your constituency can organize itself to create the power it needs to accomplish goals that will achieve the change they need. And turning their campaign into an organization gives them access to the capacity to build on their successes into the future.



Although you answer these questions in dialogue with your constituency, their leadership, and others, you need to bring an initial road map of where you want to go and how you imagine getting there as a working hypothesis so your journey can begin. To do that you need to strategize.

What Is Strategizing?

Strategizing, like story telling, is a way we exercise agency, making purposeful choices in the face of uncertainty. While story telling is a way we can articulate our purpose, strategizing is how we find a pathway to achieving that purpose. Both are natural capabilities. We begin telling stories almost as soon as we begin to speak and we begin to strategize as soon as we can conceive purposes, find that purpose frustrated, and have to figure out how to achieve it. The challenge in learning organizing is to step back a moment from this everyday activity, reflect on it more deeply, and bring greater intentionality to it so that it can become an element of the craft of leadership.

Strategizing is how to turn what you have” into “what you need” to get “what you want” - how to turn resources into power, as shown in chart #2. If we think of power as the influence one actor can exercise over another because of an imbalance in interests and resources, as shown in Chart #3, one way to correct the imbalance is to aggregate more resources. That’s why people form unions, advocacy organizations, or nations. But another way to correct the imbalance is to move the fulcrum on which the balance rests to get more leverage out of the same resources. Good strategists learn to get more leverage from resources that ARE available. Power is thus a matter of resources and resourcefulness. Because organizers try to create change, they often have to rely on resourcefulness to compensate for a lack of access to resources.

Chart #2



Strategy and Tactics

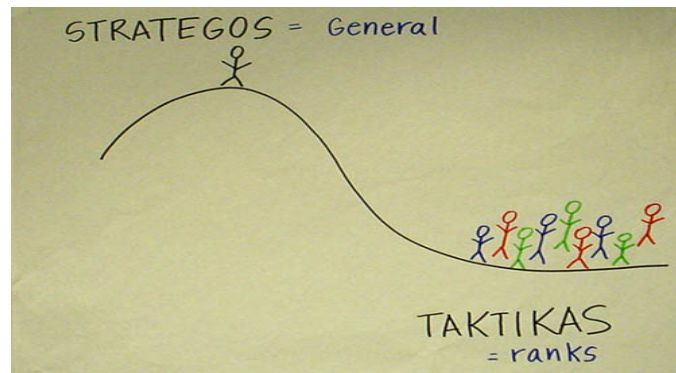
Strategizing is a way of imagining, theorizing or hypothesizing. It is the conceptual link we make among the places, the times and the activities with which we mobilize and deploy resources and goals we hope to achieve. It is how we can frame specific choices within a broader framework of purpose.

The word strategy comes from Greek for general - *strategos*. When armies were about to clash on the plane, the general (Chart #3) went up to the top of the hill and, with the goal of winning the battle, evaluated resources on both sides, reflected on opportunities and constraints imposed by the battle field, and how to deploy troops in ways most likely to achieve his goal. A good *strategos* not only had a good overview of the field. He also had intimate knowledge of the capacities of his men and those of his opponent, details of streams and bridges, and mastery of both the forest and the trees. Once the battle was underway, however, the best *strategos* was often back on the battlefield where he could adjust the plan as conditions changed.

The *taktikas* were the individual ranks of soldiers with specific competencies whom the *strategos* deployed to take specific actions at specific times and places. Tactics are specific actions through which strategy is implemented. Tactics are no less important than strategy, but they are different. A *strategos* with an excellent overview, but who misjudges the competence of his *taktikas* would be lost. Getting results, taking initiative successfully, requires developing the capacity for good strategy and good tactics.

Strategy is not something “big” and tactics, something “small”. In any setting – whether it is national, state or local or long term, medium term, or short term – in which we commit to a goal, consider our context, and figure how to turn our resources into activities (tactics) through which we can achieve our goal, we are strategizing.

Chart #3



Strategy is Motivated: What’s the Problem

We are natural strategists. Although strategy is natural, however, we have to be motivated to strategize by a problem. How many times have you strategized today? We conceive purposes, meet obstacles in achieving those purposes, and we figure out how to overcome those obstacles. But because we are creatures of habit, we only strategize when we have to: when we have a problem, something goes wrong, something forces a change in our plans. That’s when we pay attention, take a look around, and decide what we have to do. And just as our emotional understanding inhabits the stories we tell, our cognitive understanding inhabits the strategy we devise.

This means we may have to step out of habitual routines, what we are “comfortable” doing, what we know how to do and consider novel pathways. This can be very frightening, even as it can be exhilarating. When we don’t strategize, it is often not because we don’t know how to, but because it can be very hard. When we strategize we give a voice to the future, enabling it to make claims on the present. This requires the courage to say no to current demands to commit to an uncertain future. When we must make choices about how to invest scarce resources, voices of present constituencies speak loudly, even though they were created by choices in the past. The voices of future constituencies are silent.

Our choices may turn out as we wish, but then again, they may not. Trying to shape the future may require choices that could involve substantial risk in the present. The first step in shaping the future, however, is to imagine it... and then to find the courage to act on our imagination.

Strategy is Creative: How Can We Solve the Problem?

Strategy requires that we develop our understanding of why the problem hasn't been solved, as well as a theory of what we could do to solve the problem, a theory of change. And because those who resist change (and who don't have the problem) often have access to greater amounts of resources, those who seek change (and do have the problem) have to be more resourceful. And we have to use our resourcefulness to create the capacity – the power – to get the problem solved. It's not so much about getting "more" resources, as it is about using one's resources Strategy is creative, linking resources to outcomes through intentional choice of tactics.

Strategy is a Verb

Strategy is about turning "what you have" into "what you need" to get "what you want" – how to use resources you have to achieve your goals, given constraints and opportunities. It is an ongoing activity, not making a "strategic plan" at the beginning of a campaign that others will implement. Planning (getting an overview of the plan) can help those responsible for a campaign arrive at a common vision of where they want to go, how they hope to get there, and clarify the choices that must be made to begin. But the real action in strategy is, as Alinsky put it, in the reaction – by other actors, the opposition, and the challenges and opportunities that emerge along the way. What makes it "strategy" and not "reaction" is the mindfulness we can bring to bear on our choices relative to what we want to achieve, like a potter interacting with the clay on the wheel, as Mintzberg describes it.¹ Although our goal remains clear, strategy requires constant adaptation to new information. Something worked better than we expected it to? Something did not work for unforeseen reasons. Things changed. Some people are opposing our efforts so we have to respond to their action. The launching of a strategic campaign is only the beginning of the work of strategizing. This is one reason it is so important to have a leadership team that reflects the full diversity of skills, information and interested needed to achieve your goal. We call this "strategic capacity." Strategizing is not a single event, but a process or a loop continuing throughout the life of a project (Chart #4). We plan, we act, we evaluate the results of our action, we plan some more, we act further, etc. We strategize, as we implement, not prior to it.

Strategy is Situated

Connecting the View from the Valley with the View from the Mountain

Strategy unfolds within a specific context, the particularities of which really matter. One of the most challenging aspects of strategizing is that it requires mastery of the details of the “arena” within which it is enacted as well as the ability to go up on the mountain and see things with a view of the whole. The imaginative power of strategizing can be realized only when rooted within an understanding of the trees AND the forest.

One way to create the “arena of action” is by mapping the “actors” that populate that arena as we did in Week Three. It may be time to revisit that picture. Who is your constituency? Where will your leadership come from? What other actors have an interest in the action as opponents, allies, supporters, and neutrals? In organizing, strategy is about how to influence the choices of other actors so creating a map of these actors, their interests, resources, and relationships can help you imagine the arena of play. But resources are also not always obvious and good strategy often involves discovering resources in unexpected places. You make judgments about constraints and opportunities within your “arena” of action.

Chart #4



What Are Tactics?

A tactic is a specific activity through which you implement strategy - targeted in specific ways and carried out at specific times. It's the activity through which your strategy becomes real. Strategy without tactics is just a bunch of nice ideas. Tactics without strategy is a waste of resources. So the art of organizing is in the dynamic relationship between strategy and tactics, using the strategy to inform the tactics, and learning from the tactics to adapt strategy.

As we work toward our goal we learn from our successes and failures how to adapt our tactics to become more and more effective over time. The Bus Boycotters began with a lawsuit but then focused on a boycott, organized a car pool, used contacts with the media, organized outside support, etc. etc. In fact, strategizing involves an ongoing creative stream of tactical innovation and adaptation as circumstances change, opportunities emerge, and reverses are suffered.

One important aspect of tactical decision-making is targeting - figuring out precisely how to focus limited resources on doing what is likely to yield the greatest result. One critical choice is about what problem you want to turn into an "issue" around which to mobilize. California organizer Mike Miller distinguishes between a "topic" such as education, a "problem" such as a lousy school, and an "issue" such as replacing this principal with another one. Topics become problems when they become real within people's experience. They become "issues" when a solution to the problem has been defined. The topic of racial discrimination becomes a problem when "I have to get on the bus at the front, pay my fare, get off, get on again at the back and sit (or stand) in the back even when there are empty seats in the 'white' section." A problem, in turn, becomes an issue when specific actors can do something very specific about it; e.g., telling the bus company to integrate the buses (a solution) or face a boycott. A good issue is achievable, yet significant. Another critical choice is about which decision-makers you will hold accountable for taking action on your issue.

It can be useful to develop a set of criteria to evaluate your tactics. Here are a few ideas (there are more in the readings by Sharp, Bobo, and Alinsky).

- Make the most of your own resources, as distinct from those of your opponent.
- Operate with the experience of your constituency, outside that of your opponent.

- Choose tactics that unify your constituency while dividing your opposition.
- Choose tactics that are consistent with your values.
- Choose tactics that are fun, motivational, and simple.

DEVELOPING YOUR ORGANIZING PROJECT

PEOPLE Who are the Actors?

Constituency

Organizers transform a community into a constituency. A community shares values or interests. A *constituency* is a community organized to use its resources to act on those interests (from the Latin for standing together). *Clients* (from the Latin for “one who leans on another”) have an interest in services others provide. *Customers* (a term derived from trade) have an interest in a good a seller can provide in exchange for a cash resource.

Constituents are the heart of organizations that serve them. Clients and Customers are usually external to these organizations. Constituents can become “members” of the organization just as citizens become “members” of a democracy. Voters are constituents of an elected official. Workers employed by particular employers may be constituents of a union (why wouldn't they be constituents of their employer?). People with environmental concerns may become the constituents of environmental organizations.

Economist Albert Hirschman described three alternative responses to the need for change in a system: exit, voice, and loyalty. Constituents can influence the system through *voice*: making themselves heard through internal means. Customers and clients can only assert influence through *exit*, taking their resources elsewhere.² The organizers job is to turn a *community* – people who share common values or interests – into a *constituency* – people who can act on behalf of those values or interests.

Organizers assume that people are not mere “objects” of “social forces” that “cause” them to do things, but are, in fact, “agents” of change or “actors.” As actors we remember, imagine, choose, and reflect on choices. Although “social forces” influence our choices, our choices also shape “social forces.” Because we are not atomized individuals, floating in space,

² Albert Hirschman, (1970), *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press), p.16.

we exercise agency interdependently with others whose decisions affect our own. Can we understand the "drug problem", for example, without taking into consideration the myriad dealers, smugglers, and producers who mobilize to frustrate every attempt to solve it?

Leadership

Although your constituency is the focus of your work, your goal as an organizer is identify, recruit and develop leadership from within that constituency – initially, a leadership team – who will organize everyone else. Their work, like your own, is to “accept responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty.” They facilitate the work members of their constituency must do to achieve their goals, represent their constituency to others, and are accountable to their constituency. Leaders of large – or small - bureaucratic organizations may have little relationship with clients or customers. Leaders of civic associations, on the other hand, can only earn leadership through relationships with their constituents - club officers, union stewards, members of a parish council, etc. Full time or part time people who do the day-to-day work of the organization may also serve as leaders, whether volunteer or paid, even if not drawn from the constituency if they are accountable to it -- full time local union presidents, chairs of mission committees, and the people who pass out leaflets on behalf of a candidate. Most organizations have a governing “body” that decides policy, chooses staff, and may or may not be involved in day-to-day activities. In bureaucratic organizations, the governing body may be self-selected, selected by outside groups, or by donors or investors - but rarely include leaders drawn from among their clients.

You work with the leadership team you recruit by coaching them in the five organizing practices you are learning: relationship building, storytelling, structuring, strategizing, and action. Developing their leadership is not only the way you, as an organizer, can “get to scale.” It is how you can create new capacity for action – power – within your constituency. This is a critical difference between organizing and other forms of problem solving. To the extent powerlessness is responsible for the challenges your constituents face, developing the leadership who can mobilize others can create power where there had been none - thus getting at a root cause of the problem that needs to be solved.

Opposition

In pursuing their interests, constituents may find themselves in conflict with interests of other individuals or organizations. An employers’ interest in maximizing profit, for example,

may conflict with an employees' interest in earning a living wage. A tobacco company's interests may conflict not only with those of anti-smoking groups, but of the public in general. A street gang's interests may conflict with those of a church youth group. The interests of a Republican Congressional candidate conflict with those of the Democratic candidate in the same district. At times, however, opposition may not be immediately obvious, emerging clearly only in the course of a campaign.

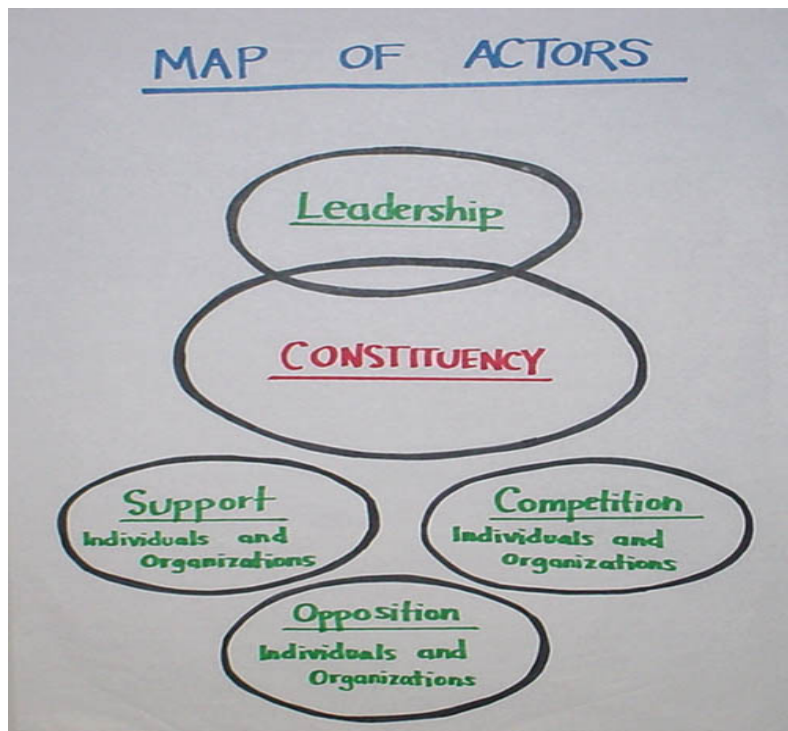
Supporters

People whose interests are not directly or obviously affected may find it to be in their interest to back an organization's work financially, politically, voluntarily, etc. Although they may not be part of the constituency, they may sit on governing boards. For example, Church organizations and foundations provided a great deal of support for the civil rights movement.

Competitors and Collaborators

These are individuals or organizations with which we may share some interests, but not others. They may target the same constituency, the same sources of support, or face the same opposition. Two unions trying to organize the same workforce may compete or collaborate. Two community groups trying to serve the same constituency may compete or collaborate in their fundraising.

Chart #5: Map of Actors



What are their Values, Interests, and Resources?

Why would the people whom you hope to organize want to organize? What do they value? What are their interests? Are those values or interests at risk? How? The desire to create change most often comes as a response to some form of a present that has been made “intolerable”, not simply for the sake of making change. Your reasons for thinking they “ought” to organize might not be their reasons. How do you know? If a problem they are facing goes unaddressed, what will that look like? And how would the world look differently if it were addressed?

You can only find answers to these questions by interacting with your constituency, but you have to start with a “hypothesis.” Tools of social science, as well as past experience, can give you some idea where to look, what questions to ask, and how to get to know your constituency.

One set of tools is illustrated in *Chart #6: Needs, Values, and Interests*. Psychologist Clayton Alderfer describes motivational dynamics at work within us as driven by existence, relational and growth needs – physical wellbeing, social wellbeing, and developmental wellbeing.³ Our needs matter, but as cultural psychologist Jerome Bruner argues, we learn to value these needs – and ways to satisfy them – in cultural settings in which we grow up and interact with others.⁴ And because we are purposeful creatures we translate our values into goals – or interests – on behalf of which we mobilize resources.

Threats to these goals, the values that shape them or sudden opportunities to achieve them may create an urgent interest in organizing. Having learned to value education as a pathway to a good life, I may want to make sure my child gets a good one. But sharp increases in college tuition, for example, and cuts in public funds, may scuttle my plans. This might give me an interest in working with others to do something – to demand reductions in tuition, at least in public universities; to demand restoration of funds; to find scholarship alternatives. Our values shape our broad life goals and our interests specify outcomes we pursue to achieve those goals. We define our interests, however, which in Latin means, “to exist among,” in relation to others. Most of us have interests in many domains, some more immediate than others: family,

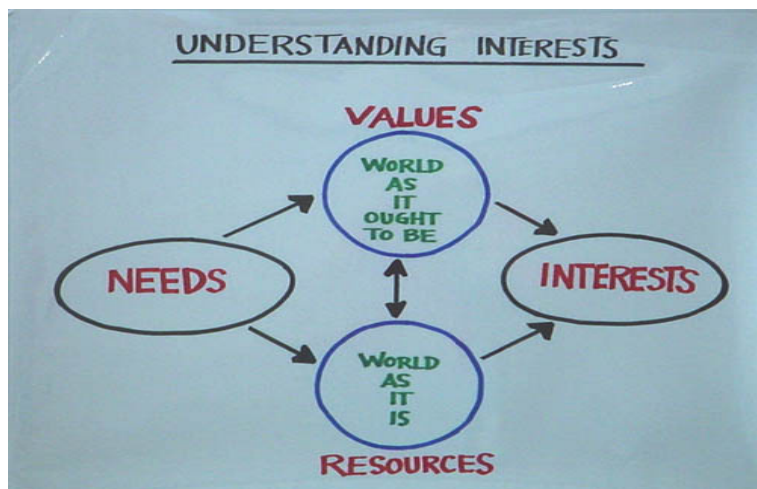
³ C. Alderfer, (1972), *Existence, Relatedness and Growth*. (New York, Free Press).

⁴ J. Bruner

community, work, faith cultural or recreational activities, and politics. Learning to interpret the interests of our constituents – and our own interests-- and the values that shape them -- is critical to understanding organizing.

Resources matter too. What kind of resource do they have at their disposal with which they can address their interests or meet possible challenges? Do they have the resources? Do they depend on others for their resources? What kind of resources matter? Who holds them?

Chart #6: Needs, Values, and Interests



CHANGE

So what kind of change might your organizing project aim to achieve? What is your purpose? It may be early to specify a specific outcome for your project, but what change could you imagine your constituency organizing to achieve? This requires asking why they have the problems they do? Why hasn't anything been done about it? What would it take to do something about it? What would that change actually look like. If inequity in education seems to be a challenge, what might more equitable education look like, concretely? If lack of diversity on the faculty seems to be a challenge, what might a more diverse faculty actually look like? Before we can set a specific goal to which to work, however, we need to develop a theory of change: how to turn our resources into the power we need to achieve change.

POWER

Theories of Change

To figure out the goal of your campaign you also have to figure out how you can make it happen: your theory of change. This is challenging because we all have assumptions about how the world works, including why we have the problems we do, what it would take to solve them, and what we can do to make it happen. Articulating a “theory of change” is a way of making these assumptions explicit so they can be examined, evaluated, and, if necessary, replaced with a more realistic set of assumptions. Your theory of change becomes the foundation of your strategy – how to turn the resources you have into the power you need to get what you want.

To get at your theory of change, ask yourself why the problem you are hoping to solve hasn’t been solved already? In other words, what’s your theory of “no change”? Is it because the people who could solve the problem need more information? Do they realize it’s a problem, but don’t know how to solve it? Or do they simply have no interest in solving the problem. If they don’t, why not? In case of the Bus Boycott, for example, was the problem a lack of awareness as to the hurt that was being caused African-Americans (and, in reality, white Americans as well) by segregation? Was it due to the fact that whites and blacks weren’t “communicating”? Was it too costly to desegregate? Or was the white community committed to using its power to keep things as they were because they wanted them that way? Because it was the “right” way to order of their society, and it was in their political interest to keep it that way. This kind of analysis does not, in itself, produce strategy, but it is the first step in figuring out what KIND of strategy you will need to change things. It is a way to surface assumptions about why things are the way they are, that may or may not be so, but that influence your thinking as to what it will take to change them.

So what would it take to change things? If the folks in Montgomery thought the problem was one of “information”, perhaps they could have used their resources conduct an “awareness raising” campaign to communicate to white community just how bad segregation made the black community feel. If they thought the problem was one of “communication” they might have tried to convene meetings with the white leadership to explain why everyone would be better off without segregation. But they concluded it was a power problem. Segregation persisted because the white community believed in it and had the power to make it so. It would only change if it became more costly to the interests of the white community – or those who held power within

the white community – to stay the course than to change. Perhaps losing enough money would give them an interest in change. Perhaps having to pay court fines? Or perhaps it would take going to jail. Based on this analysis they developed a strategy that focused on buses, and, in turn, the tactics – litigation, the boycott, the carpools – through which they could enact that strategy.

The reason their strategy was an organizing strategy, however, and that it kicked off the civil rights movement in a way that *Brown v. Board of Education* had not, was that it was a particular kind of power strategy. Its power grew out of a commitment of the resources of almost every African-American in that community, beginning with the “feet” of the bus riders who would now use them to walk to work. So when victory was won it yielded not only a change in transportation policy but a newly empowered community, a more widely accessible form of struggle, and a whole new generation of leadership, and that is what sparked the growth of the movement. So it isn’t only power that creates change, but from whose resources that power is created that determines who is empowered by the change.

So what is power? Dr. King defined power as the “ability to achieve purpose.” “Whether it is good or bad,” he said, “depends on the purpose.” In Spanish the word for power is simply *poder* - to be able to, to have the capacity to. So if power simply describes capacity, why, as Alinsky asks, is it the “p-word” - something we don’t admit we want, acknowledge others have, or even talk about?

Relational Power

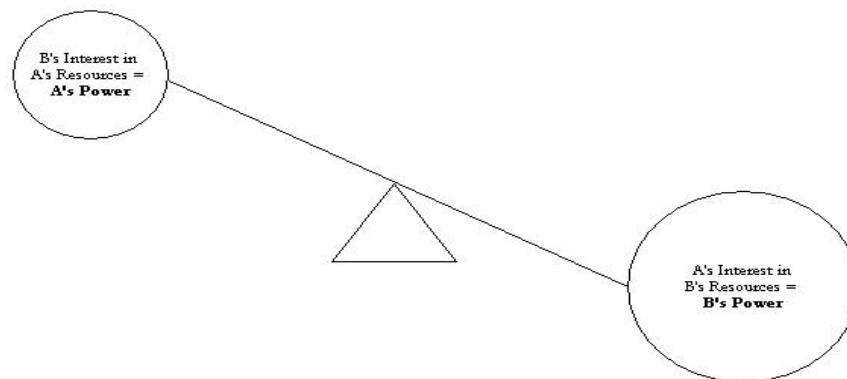
Richard Emerson argues that power is not a thing but a relationship.⁵ We all need resources to achieve our purposes. Sometimes we have access to all the resources we need, but more often than not our interests require access to the resources of another. This creates an opportunity for exchange: I can trade resources that I have so the other person can achieve their goals for the resources they have that I need to achieve my own. For example, my friend and I want to go to the movies and he has a car, but no money for gas, while I have money for gas, but no car. Based on this mutuality of interests we can influence each other to act interdependently, creating more “power with ” each other than we had singly. Bernard Loomer and Jean Baker Miller describe this as “power to,” “power with,” or interdependency.⁶ Mobilizing power in this

⁵ R. Emerson, (1962), "Power-Dependence Relations." *American Sociological Review*, 27: 31-41.

⁶ B. M. Loomer and Jean Baker Miller, (1976), "Two Kinds of Power," The D.R. Sharpe Lecture on Social Ethics, October 29, 1975." *Criterion* 15(1): 11-29.

way creates a whole greater than the sum of its parts. New immigrants, for example, may pool their savings in a credit union to make low interest loans available to its members -- increasing their financial power. "Power with" creates the capacity to accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone.

Chart #7: Relational Power



But what if four of us want to go to the movies and my friend's car only has room for 2 passengers? We could draw straws to see who gets to go and who doesn't, and each of those who get to go contribute half of the gas. But what if my friend decides that he has an interest not only in going to the movies, but also in making some money from the deal? It turns out that he has control over one resource, his car, that we all need, but no one of us controls the resources he needs, gas money. This imbalance of need, or dependency, gives him the leverage to exercise "power over" us by offering the two spots in the car to the highest bidders, regardless of how much the gas costs. But we still have an option, depending on how badly he wants to go to the movies. All four of us can get together and agree that we will only pay the cost of the gas and not a penny more. If he wants to go badly enough, we will have rebalanced the situation, turning it back into one of "power with."

Organizing is suited to deal with both power problems. First, a constituency may organize to create power "with" one another, through interdependent collaboration, to achieve the change they want; e.g., a cooperative day care, a car pool, a credit union. Second, a constituency may organize to challenge "power" over them held by other actors; e.g., forming a union, conducting an issue campaign, running an election. Organizing uniquely not only "solves the problem" but

enables a constituency to acquire power it didn't have before. And this is what gets at the source of the problem: a powerless constituency. As Gandhi showed, the fact power is interdependent means that its exercise depends on the "cooperation" –or compliance - of the very people who are being taken advantage of. And they can "stop the machine" simply by refusing to cooperate.

POWER WITH

Sometimes we can create the change we need just by organizing our resources with others, creating power with them. For example, creating a cooperative day care, or a community credit union, or a volunteer service bank.



POWER OVER

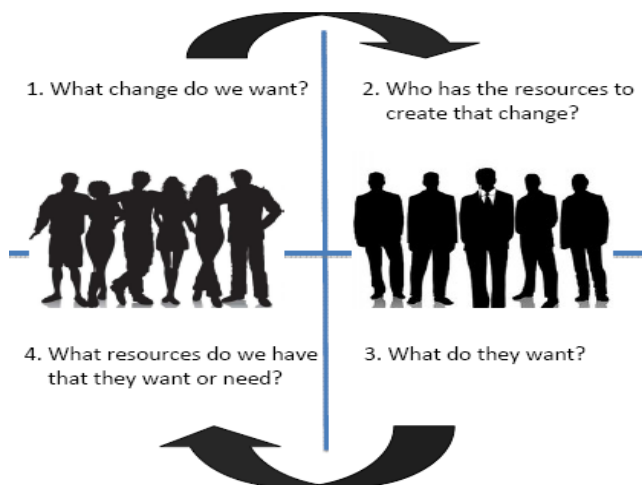
Sometimes others hold power over decisions or resources that we need in order to create change in our lives. In that case we have to organize our own power with others first in order to make a claim on the resources or decisions that will fulfill our interests.



Since power is relational you can use the four questions below to track it down:

CHANGING POWER OVER

When we have to engage with those who have power over us in order to create change, we ask ourselves four basic questions.



The Strategy Question:

5. What's our theory of change? How could we organize our resources to give us enough leverage to get what we want?

Two Kinds of Power: Collaboration and Claims Making

Both kinds of power – power with and power over – are at work in organizing. Members of our constituency can create the power to achieve a shared goal by collaborating to use their resources interdependently in ways they had not done before: e.g. cooperative childcare, and credit unions. On the other hand, where real conflicts of interest exist, organizing requires a “claims making” strategy, mobilizing constituency resources to alter relationships of dependency and domination. If workers combine their resources in a union they may be able to balance their individual dependency on their employer with his dependency on their labor as a whole. In this way dependent “power over” relationship can become interdependent “power to” relationship.

But creating the power to successfully challenge “power over” may require some “power to” first. Many unions, for example, began with death benefit societies, sickness funds, and credit unions. On the other hand, efforts that began to create “power with” may turn out to be actually challenging “power over” as conflicts of interest that were not previously apparent surface. The strongest opposition to a recent effort to create a community credit union in New York came from actors no one considered—the loan sharks and their political allies.

Three Faces of Power

Why are conflicts of interest not always apparent? As John Gaventa argues power operates on multiple levels, illustrated in Chart #6 below.⁷ We can detect the first “face” of power—the visible face—by observing who wins among decision makers faced with choices as to how to allocate resources. Attend a board meeting, city council meeting, legislative session, or board meeting and you’ll see one side win and another side lose, showing who’s got the power.

But there’s more to it than that. Who decides what gets on the agenda to be decided? And who decides who sits at the table making decisions? Lukes calls deciding what’s on the agenda and who sits at the table the second “face” of power. This can be observed when there are groups clamoring to get issues on the agenda, but can’t get past the “gatekeeper.” This is the situation that African Americans faced during many years of apparent “racial harmony” before the civil rights movement. There was no lack of groups trying to bring racial issues before Congress, but these issues rarely got to the point of congressional debate because those controlling the agenda kept them off the floor.

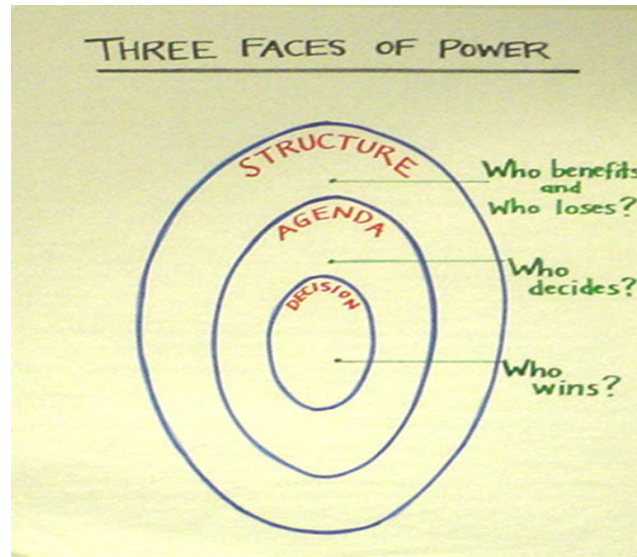
The third “face” of power is harder to detect. Sometimes the power relationships that shape our world are so deeply embedded that we “take them for granted.” Before the women’s

⁷ J. Gaventa, (1982), *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. (Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press).

movement, for example, few people claimed job discrimination against women was “an issue.” Women’s interests were not being voted down in Congress (there were almost no women in Congress) and women’s groups were not picketing outside, unable to place their issue on the agenda. Yet women occupied subordinate positions in most spheres of public life. Were they “content” with this situation? Perhaps. But sometimes, even though people would like things to be different, they can’t imagine that they could be—enough, at least, to take the risks to make them so. To detect this face of power, Lukes says, you have to look deeper—beyond the question of who decides or who gets on the agenda to look at who benefits and who loses in the allocation of valued resources. If you then ask why the losers lose and the winners win, you may discover the power disparity at work. (This can be tricky because the winners always claim they “deserve” to win while the losers “deserve” to lose, and sometimes they convince the losers).

From this perspective, take another look at your project and ask the questions: What is the source of the challenges your constituency faces? Do your constituents lack the power they need to assert their interests? Do they lack resources? Or could they be using the resources they have better? Could they use them better by collaborating with one another (power with)? Could they use them more effectively by using them to influence the interests of others whose resources they need? Did someone fail to allocate resources, as in voting down a school-funding proposal? Were the concerns of those with similar interests kept off the agenda? Or do people just assume that this is how things are, so it is wise to make the best of themes legitimated? A couple of years ago, a student asked why so many Harvard students do public service as students, but abandon it in their professional lives. The most common explanation was that her generation just “doesn’t care.” She noticed that, in contrast to the very elaborate recruiting rituals each fall for investment banks and consulting firms, virtually no one was recruiting on campus for careers in public service. She thought this was an example of the third face of power and organized a “Careers and Social Responsibility” conference in response.

Chart #8: Three Faces of Power

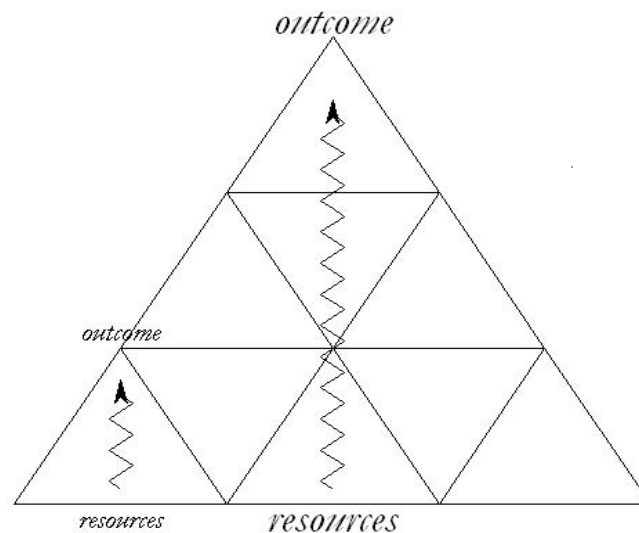


Organizing power begins with the commitment by the first person who wants to make it happen. Without this commitment, there are no resources with which to begin. Commitment is observable as action. The work of organizers begins with their acceptance of the responsibility to challenge others to do the same.

YOUR STRATEGIC GOAL

Now that you've developed a theory of change its time to focus on a strategic goal that will enable you to achieve the change you want to fulfill your purpose. No one strategic goal can solve everything, but unless we choose "a" goal on which to focus our resources, energy, and imagination, we risk wasting precious resources in ways that won't add up. This pyramid chart is one way to think about how goals may be nested: at each level of a campaign we imagine an outcome, assess resources available to achieve that outcome, and, in light of the context, figure out a way to turn those resources into the power to achieve that outcome (theory of change).

Chart #9



These are some criteria to consider in deciding on a goal for your campaign:

- Focuses your resources on a single strategic outcome.
- Builds your constituency's resources and capacity
- Leverages your constituency's strength and the weakness of the opposition.
- Is visible, significant, and important enough to motivate constituency engagement.
- Is contagious and could be emulate

A laundry list of “what we are going to try” is not a strategy but a list of possible tactics. Three or four pathways, such as fund raising, outreach, and research is not strategy unless anchored to a specific goal to which you have committed. In the Bus Boycott mass meetings, car pools, and walking to work were tactics, not a strategy. The goal was clear, specific, and sustained – desegregating the buses. The tactics were constantly adapted. As Cesar Chavez used to say strategy is not so much about making the *right* decision as it is about making the decision that you made the right decision. How do we know when we need to adapt, or when we need to “stay the course?” One of the primary responsibilities of strategic leadership is to manage this tension between commitment and adaptation.

And so does motivation. In narrative terms, our strategic goal becomes a critical part of our “story of now”: we are faced with an urgent challenge, we look for hope we can meet the challenge, and we commit to a course of action, our strategic goal. Hope inspires not only in terms of the values in which it is rooted, but also suggests pathways of possibility. The vision of American democracy that Dr. King articulates in his Holt Street Baptist Church talk is a

powerful one, as are the values of the faith he evokes, but he also identifies a source of hope for dealing with the problem at hand – the U.S. Supreme Court decision desegregating schools. The hope that is expressed in a story of now is not a picture of “flowers in May”, but of a way forward. A motivating vision, then, articulates a concrete, urgent need for change in moral (Injustice) and strategic (segregated busses) terms. It contrasts this challenge with a source of hope, also articulated in moral (justice) and strategic (desegregated buses) terms.

So in determining your own strategic goal, create a list of the criteria it needs to meet – solve the problem at hand, creative use of constituency resources, visible, develops leadership, etc. You then may want to brainstorm as many possible goals as you can, reflect on them, synthesize them, do it again. Then you must choose. Commit to a goal that you believe most likely to enable you to mobilize your resources (what you have) in as powerful a way as possible (what you need) to achieve that goal (what you want). There is no perfect choice. This is why strategy is hard. As Cesar Chavez used to say, “it’s not so much making the right decision, as it is making the decision you make the right decision.

In light of your analysis, consider the criteria that make for a good strategic goal:

- Focuses resources on a single outcome that may enable you to achieve greater outcomes.
- Enables your constituency to translate its resources into power, greater capacity.
- Leverages your constituency’s strength and the weakness of the opposition.
- Be visible, significant, and important enough to motivate engagement.
- Be contagious and can be emulated.

Check your goal against these criteria. Consider other options. Don’t be afraid to brainstorm, come up with crazy ideas, or change course. Evaluate your goals against these criteria – or others you consider important.

The Rhythm of Organizing

The Campaign

The rhythm of organizing is the campaign: coordinated streams of activity focused on achieving specific goals. Campaigns unfold over time with a rhythm that slowly builds a foundation, gathers gradual momentum with preliminary peaks, culminates in a climax when a campaign is won or lost, and then achieves resolution (Chart #7).

Our word for campaign derives from a similar source as other words we have come across this semester -- the word for field, this time in Latin. Campaigns were conducted on fields of battle. They were concentrated, intense, had a clear beginning and end, and, usually, a winner and a loser. A campaign was an episode in a much greater undertaking, such as winning a war, but was made of a number of battles that together comprised the campaign. A campaign was not the whole nation, but an event in the life of the nation, which strengthened it or weakened it. Conducting a campaign is not the same thing as managing an ongoing program, but it is how programs are created, strengthened, or renewed.

A campaign is a way to organize time – one of the most valuable resources we have. As Gersick shows, organizations have a temporal life as well as a spatial one. Work gets done according to the internal rhythm of an organization that may be more or less well “entrained” with the rhythm of events in its environment. Many people note, for example, that student groups need to get started in the first weeks of the semester or they won’t get started at all. After mid-semester, the rhythm changes as people focus on finishing what they’ve begun, rather than beginning new things. Stephen Jay Gould says that time is sometimes a “cycle” and sometimes an “arrow.”⁸ Thinking of time as a “cycle” helps us to maintain our routines, our normal procedures, our annual budget, etc. Thinking of time as an “arrow” on the other hand focuses us on making change, on achieving specific outcomes, on focusing our efforts. A campaign is time as an “arrow.”

⁸ Gould, S. J. (1987). *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and metaphor in the discovery of geological time*. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Chart #10



Why are Campaigns Strategic and Motivational?

A campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize action. It is strategic because it is a way to create the capacity we will need to win, building it as our campaign unfolds. Each campaign peak lifts us to another level of capacity; moving from recruiting volunteers, for example, to putting those volunteers to work, recruiting supporters. It is motivational because it enacts an unfolding story of the hope that we can achieve our objective. As it progresses, we find we can make a difference. Our work acquires the urgency of genuine deadlines. The solidarity of collaborating with others in a common cause energizes us. A campaign allows us to turn our dissatisfaction (anger) to constructive purpose.

Campaigns facilitate targeting resources and energy on specific objectives, one at a time. Creating something new requires intense energy and concentration - unlike the inertia that keeps things going once they have begun. Campaigns are crucibles out of which new organizations, programs, or practices can emerge. Campaigns allow us to maximize the value of our time - our most limited resource. We can invest energy and commitment for a limited number of days, weeks or months at levels we cannot - and should not - sustain for long periods of time. As a campaign ends, we consolidate our “wins” or our “losses,” we return to “normal life,” we regroup, and perhaps we undertake another campaign in the future. The “adventurous” quality of a campaign facilitates the development of relationships more quickly - and with greater intensity - than would ordinarily be the case. We more easily come to share a common “story” that we all take part in authoring

The timing of a campaign is structured as an unfolding narrative or story. It begins with a foundation period (prologue), starts crisply with a kick-off (curtain goes up), builds slowly to successive peaks (act one, act two), culminates in a final peak determining the outcome (denouement), and is resolved as we celebrate the outcome (epilogue). Our efforts generate momentum not mysteriously, but as a snowball. As we accomplish each objective we generate new resources that can be applied to achieve the subsequent greater objective. Our motivation grows as each small success persuades us that the subsequent success is achievable - and our commitment grows. The unfolding story of our campaign makes the unfolding story of our organization more credible and, thus, more achievable. Timing has to be carefully managed because a campaign can peak too quickly, exhausting everyone, and then fall into decline. Another danger is a campaign may “heat up” faster in some areas than in others - as some people burn out and others never get going. What role did timing play with DSNI? Why was Gandhi’s “salt march” a particularly good example of timing?

A campaign links relational, story, strategy, and action tactics as each lays groundwork for the next. We may begin the campaign with 5 organizers, each of whom uses house meetings to recruit 15 precinct leaders (75 people), each of whom goes door to door to recruit 5 volunteers for the phone bank (375 people), each of whom contacts and commits 25 voters (9375 people). Along the way, leadership develops, signs go up, people are talked with, rallies are held, and so forth. Using the 1988 California campaign plan, we turned 300 organizers into 11,000 precinct leaders into 100,000 house signs into 25,000 Election Day volunteers into 750,000 additional voters. Although it was not enough to elect our candidate President, we created a new wave of grass roots leadership for political efforts throughout the state for the next several years.

Campaigns provide an opportunity for learning by allowing for “small losses” in the early days of a campaign. As Sitkin argues, creating the space for “small losses” early on in a project

offer participants the opportunity to try new things, which is essential to learning how to do them.⁹ And it affords the organization as a whole a chance to learn how to “get it right.” In most campaigns, we know that we will have to change the first “rap” that we write, once the “rubber hits the road” and we begin to use it. It is important to use the early phase of a campaign “mindfully” in this way so it isn’t just a preview of what we will do wrong on a large scale.

As is the case with strategy, campaigns are nested. Each campaign objective can be viewed as a “mini-campaign” with its own prologue, kick-off, peaks, climax, and epilogue. The campaign also “chunks out” into distinct territories, districts, or other responsibilities for which specific individuals are responsible. A good campaign can be thought of as a symphony of multiple movements, each with an exposition, development, and recapitulation; but which together proceed toward a grand finale. A symphony is also constructed from the interplay of many different voices interacting in multiple ways but whose overall coordination is crucial for the success of the undertaking. If this seems an overly structured metaphor, you may prefer a jazz ensemble.

What Are the Phases of a Campaign?

A campaign strategically integrates relational, motivation, strategic and action tactics - as well as leadership development - in each of five phases: a foundation, kick-off, peaks, the peak, and resolution. Use Campaign Chart #10 to look for similar dynamics in the cases we read about or in your own project.

Foundation

During the foundation period, the goal is to create the capacity (the “power to”) with which to launch a campaign. A foundation period may last a few days, weeks, months or years - depending on the scope of the undertaking and the extent to which you start “from scratch.” The foundation for the farm workers’ boycott campaign, for example, was built over a period of three years. During a foundation period, *relational* tactics are emphasized and typically include one-on-one meetings, house meetings, and meetings of small groups of supporters. *Interpretive* tactics include deliberation to clarify interests, identifying problems, thinking through how to turn problems into issues, researching the terrain, and designing a plan - as well as first formulating the story of the campaign. What kinds of *action* tactics are most useful for this period? (Remember, you want to build as broad a base as possible while not letting things heat up too quickly). This is the time to nail down resources, conduct a census, handle small issues (claims), deal with individual cases (collaboration), and so forth. This is a crucial period for leadership development. Initial leaders are identified and may be brought together in an “ad hoc”

⁹ Sim Sitkin, (1992), "Learning Through Failure: The Strategy of Small Losses", *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol.14, (pp. 231-266).

organizing, sponsoring, or campaign committee - a provisional leadership group with whom you can work to develop the initial stages of the campaign.

Kick-Off

The kick-off is the moment at which the campaign officially begins. A campaign doesn't creep into existence, without anyone noticing... or it will fade away the same way. Setting a date for a kick-off creates the urgent focused concentration and commitment it takes to get things going. It is a deadline for initial recruiting, planning, and preparation of materials. Typically a kick-off takes the form of a big meeting or rally for which everyone with an initial interest is mobilized (*relational*). Leadership can be recognized there, the campaign story told, the plan ratified, and the program adopted (*interpretive*). In terms of *action*, sign-ups can be gathered, and commitments can be made to hold a meeting, make phone calls or pass out leaflets - and so forth. A kick-off is also a deadline for the formal delegation of leadership authority to those who will be responsible for carrying out the campaign. Short campaigns have a single kick-off. During the three years of the Grape Boycott, we had another kick-off each spring.

Peaks

The campaign proceeds toward reaching a series of peaks, each one building on what has gone before. By crossing the threshold of each peak, we are able to make the last burst of effort needed to break through to a higher level of capacity. In the example in the reader, we set an objective for organizer recruitment, precinct leader recruitment, voter identification, house sign distribution, Election Day organization, and total voter turnout. In the marches you read about, what were the peaks? What were the peaks of the Montgomery bus boycott? Were there peaks in the DSNi campaign? As the program unfolds, *relational* tactics that contribute to the peaks include recruiting, training, committee expansion, periodic "big meetings," etc. In the Pelosi campaign, we had a weekly Saturday AM rally at which new precinct leaders were recognized, voter contact results announced, and special training conducted. As to *interpretation*, peaks focus on development of issues and interpretation of actions and reactions. Increasingly, *action* tactics become the focus of attention as services are expanded, key events take place, or the conflict escalates. Leadership development continues as more responsibilities can be delegated, training continues, and more people are brought into the planning. The art of leading a campaign through this phase is in finding ever-new ways to broaden support, sharpen the issues, and renew commitment. It is also in devising peaks that are inspirational, yet achievable - and recovering from peaks not achieved.

The Peak

The campaign “peak” should come at the moment of maximum mobilization - even though it doesn’t always work out this way. I once ran a campaign that “peaked” at the kick-off. The leadership fell apart, losing the capacity to follow through on an exemplary mobilization. In some cases, the timing of the peak is predictable as in an election campaign. In other cases, those who lead the campaign can designate the peak. Chavez’s march to Sacramento, or his 28 day fast, Gandhi’s salt march, and the Selma to Montgomery march had “natural” peaks at their conclusion - which created a kind of “crisis” of expectation on everyone’s part. The resources mobilized to reach this peak - even though not directly targeted on the opposition - generated so much capacity that it caused the opposition to respond. In the farm worker’s boycott target, Schenley Industries was so fearful that the march would focus on them when it reached Sacramento that they signed with the union five days before it arrived. This victory turned the end of the march into a real peak as 10,000 people showed up ready to go right into the next boycott. Other times, the “peak” emerges from the actions and reactions of all those playing a role in the campaign. As the first few grape growers signed contracts, it created a powerful momentum - which we worked at heating up - and which continued to grow until the entire industry signed three months later. *Relational* tactics include mass meetings, rallies, marches, etc. *Interpretive* work is critical in bringing a campaign to a successful peak - deliberating about appropriate moves and interpreting events in the most persuasive way possible. The peak is the *action* program.

Resolution

Campaigns are either won or lost. Their effectiveness comes from the fact that they are commitments to achieve a clear, measurable, accountable outcome. Winning is not only a matter of claims making. If you are doing collaborative work, winning can mean establishing a new charter school by a certain date, enrolling a certain number of students in your program, or successfully completing a three-month program (with specific objectives). Only by risking failure do we make the kind of commitments that make success possible. This is how we can hold ourselves accountable to those with whom we make a contract. Resolving a campaign, however, means learning how to be successful at “winning” or at “losing.” To succeed at winning you must realize when you have won. Alinsky says that organizers have to be well-integrated schizoids who know how to polarize to mobilize, but depolarize to settle. In the heat of a campaign, it’s very easy to confuse the “purity” of one’s position with the interests of one’s constituency. When the grape growers were finally ready to sign with the union, we had to compromise on issues that had been very important to us, but would have prolonged the battle much more. It took serious interpretive work to realize that even though we hadn’t won

everything, we had won. On the other hand, it is important to know how to lose. Never pretend a loss is really a win - as in "well we didn't really win the election, but that doesn't really matter because it wasn't really important anyway." No one believes it, and it robs the commitment we put into the effort of its value. We need to acknowledge a loss as a loss, but put it into context, interpret what happened, accept responsibility, recognize those who contributed - and prepare for what comes next. Win or lose, a campaign should always conclude with evaluation, celebration, and preparation. When we win, we are sometimes so interested in celebrating we forget to learn why we won, what we did right and what we did wrong, and recognize those who contributed. When we lose, even when we do evaluate, we may not celebrate the hard work, the commitment, the willingness to take risk and all that was achieved. The important thing about campaigns is there is a "next time" - and it is important to prepare for it. Or, as many a Red Sox fan has been heard to remark, "Just wait 'til next season!"

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QUESTIONS

1. Draw a map of your project that places your constituency at the center. How would you draw your leadership? An opposition? Supporters? Others?
2. What challenges to the values or interests of your constituency do you hope to address? Why might they want to organize? How do you know? What outcomes might they achieve if they organize?
3. What is your theory of change? Why do you need to organize power to achieve your goals? Where can your constituency get the power they need to achieve these outcomes? Power with or power over? How will they turn the resources they have into the power they need?
 1. What are the INTERESTS of your constituency?
 2. Who has the RESOURCES needed to address these INTERESTS?

3. What are the INTERESTS of those who have the RESOURCES?

4. What RESOURCES does the constituency have which could affect these INTERESTS?

4. What have you observed about the three faces of power in your project? Is there anything that you or others can do to reveal them?

5. How can you imagine your project unfolding as a campaign? What is your strategic goal? What tactics will you use? When would it have its kick off? When would you have your first peak? What would make it a peak? What new capacity would you have built that will enable you to do something after the peak that you couldn't do before?

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