

Basics Of Organizing

You Can't Build A Machine Without Nuts And Bolts

by Shel Trapp

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Introduction

There are basic tools and principles to organizing, but they are not cookie cutters. They must be evaluated and adapted to meet the needs of your local situation. So Basics of Organizing should not be viewed as a cookie cutter to be applied to your situation, but as guidelines and suggestions to be evaluated and adapted to meet your needs and particular situation.

Originally, this manual was written with staff in mind. However, times are changing and leadership may have to take on more of the responsibility traditionally performed by hired staff. Therefore, we hope this manual will be helpful to both staff and leaders.

The success of your organizing drive will not depend upon this manual. Only your hard work and dedication to organizing will make changes happen.

This manual is dedicated community residents, leaders and organizers who, through their organizing, have won specific victories for their communities and have given hope and dignity to communities and people across our country.

*Shel Trapp
September 1985*

Door-Knocking

We go out into the community knocking on doors to find out what the community is thinking and feeling. If you know of a different way to find that out, fine. But if an organization is to truly represent a community, it is essential that the organization stays in constant touch with the residents of that community: What do they feel or think about the community? What do they want to see changed? Improved? Most organizations have found that door-knocking is the best technique to obtain that input.

When you are door-knocking, you are basically either fishing, selling or pushing, or some combination of the three. When door-knocking, you have about 30 seconds to identify yourself, state your purpose and convince the person behind the door that you are not a bill collector, selling Bibles or casing their home for a break-in. Recognizing this, you must immediately identify yourself and try to mention some organization which the people will know.

Hello, I'm _____ and I work with the [Block club, Citizens United, the church on the corner]. We are talking with people in the neighborhood to get their ideas on how the community can be improved.

Fishing

This is when you are attempting to find an issue. After the introduction, you might say something like this:

*If you could change one thing in the community, what would it be?
What do you think should be done to improve the block?
What one thing bothers you most about the community?*

If this gets no specific response, you might suggest something you have seen on the block.

I noticed the building on the corner looks kind of run down, do you know who owns it?

This should shift the discussion to a specific and what might be done about it. When fishing, you will usually get general responses such as:

*The neighborhood is run down.
The neighborhood is so dirty.
The neighborhood isn't like it used to be.*

Your job is to make these general responses into something specific by asking questions:

*What do you mean by dirty?
Can you point to one specific spot that is particularly dirty?*

Once you get a specific issue, then you ask:

Would you be willing to come to a meeting about the pile of dirt and trash on the corner?

Depending upon how strongly you think the person feels about the issue, you may even ask if the meeting could be held in his or her home next Tuesday.

If you have scored and the person agrees to hold the meeting, then you will probably stop fishing and start selling when you move to the next door.

Selling

There are basically two types of selling: selling an issue, or selling memberships in the organization. The following should provide a guideline for selling an issue:

After the introduction:

A lot of the neighbors have been saying how dirty the neighborhood looks, particularly up on the corner where the city sweeper dumps its load. I've heard that sometimes that pile of trash lays there for a week or more. Would you be interested in coming to a meeting to discuss what we can do about it?

If there is interest, start talking about date, time and place for the meeting and, if possible, even getting the meeting set for that person's home in the next few days.

If there is no interest, then you are back to fishing.

What concerns you about the community?

SELLING MEMBERSHIPS After the introduction, you have to impress me why it is to my advantage to join your organization. What have you done for families like mine? ... The implication is that if you have won things for people like me in the past, then you will win things for families like mine in the future.

We are the organization that stopped the gas company's rate hike. Because of that, we saved the average customer \$225.00 per year. That is almost

\$20.00 per month, and our membership fee is only \$15.00 for a year, and with that we send you a monthly newsletter to keep you up to date on consumer issues.

Whether you are selling an issue or memberships, the basic question that must be addressed is, "What's in it for me?" In door-knocking, you are appealing to a person's self interest.

Pushing

This is similar to selling, but differs in that not only do you have an issue, you have a date, time, and place for the meeting.

After the introduction:

A lot of the neighbors are complaining about the street sweeper dumping its trash at the corner. We are getting together next Tuesday at 7:30 at the church on the corner. We have invited the head of sanitation and she has agreed to come to the meeting. This is a good time to get something done about the trash once and for all. Will you be able to come?

If there is interest, repeat the date, time and place, give a flier and ask if there is anyone else they can talk with about the meeting. If there seems little interest:

Well, there will be time to discuss other issues. What would you like to see us do something about?

Hints

1. You may want to ask for a phone number. This depends on how comfortable the person feels with you. It can be a threat to some folks.
2. If you take notes in front of people, tell them what you are doing so they do not think you are taking notes about the make of their TV.

I just want to make a note that you brought up the problem with the rats so I don't forget it.

A good method is to carry 3 x 5 cards in your pocket, and as you are walking to the next house merely write down the address and the issue.

*3515 -- rats
3517 -- hates the organization
3521 -- promised info on city sidewalk program*

When you get back to the office, you can see what follow-up you must do. Also, the next time you go on the block you can take your cards so you have a point of reference to begin talking with people.

3. If you promise information to people, make sure you get it to them.
4. If you are asked a question for which you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to admit you don't know. Honesty is better than making a fool of yourself.
5. If you are met with hostility, don't get into an argument. You won't win anyway, and you will merely turn the person off to the organization. Simply offer thanks for the time and move

- on.
6. Dress in an acceptable way for the community. In some areas, that may mean no jeans. Do not wear buttons other than an organization button; the person behind the door may not support your particular concern.
 7. Remember, you are an intrusion into the life of the person behind the door.

Identifying Issues

**Just because you think it is an issue
does not make it an issue.
Just because you think it is not an issue
does not mean it is not an issue.**

When you find what appears to be an issue, three questions must be asked:

1. Can people be mobilized around this?
2. Is it specific?
3. Can something be done to change this situation?

If people cannot be mobilized around an issue, then you do not have an issue. A good way to "test" an issue is to call several people in your organization, talk about the situation and then ask:

Would you be interested in getting a few folks together to talk about this and see what can be done?

Or, you can bring it up at a leadership meeting on another issue at the end of the meeting to see what kind of reaction you get.

Issues must be made specific before anything can be done: there is a big difference between a concern and an issue. You can't do anything about concerns; you can win issues! Bad housing is a concern. The building at 1432 W. Whipple, with no heat, broken porch railing, owned by absentee owner Mr. Smith, is an issue and can be organized on. Health care is a concern. The fact that the local drug store will not sell generic drugs is an issue. When people say that the "community is run down," that is a concern. But you can make it into an issue by getting them to define what they mean by "run down." It could mean there are potholes in the streets, that a street light is out, that the police don't respond quickly, or that their neighbors just got a dog that barks. To be something that the organization can work on, the concern must be translated into a specific issue.

Can something be done or changed? Your local organization cannot change the state welfare system. But it can make sure residents in the community get all the benefits to which they are entitled and that they are treated with respect at the aid office. You must make sure the issues your organization takes on are not beyond the scope and power of your organization and that you can realistically expect to win or change something about the issue.

A couple of other points about issues: If you are going to attack an issue which looks like it will take a long time to win, then you have to set up and celebrate intermediate victories.

The issue is really moving now, we have a meeting with the Mayor.

For the first time, the Planning Department has agreed to meet with a community organization. We are rolling now!

Also, in a long organizing drive, make sure you have plenty of alternate targets. You cannot ask people to go picket an enemy every Saturday for six months. You must look for alternate targets. Does the enemy sit on a board of directors of some agency or corporation? Then visit that agency or corporation and ask associates there to call your enemy and come to a meeting. Does the enemy belong to any clubs or organizations or a church? The same type of visit can be made. We have even gone to the home of a mayor in the suburb where our enemy lived and asked the mayor to give our enemy a call to come to a meeting. The enemy's associates are usually willing to make these phone calls because they want to get out of the controversy.

In a long organizing drive there have to be alternative targets so people do not get bored and so the enemy has pressure coming from a variety of sources at the same time.

Make sure you personalize the enemy. Issues are not caused by systems. Issues are caused by people in the system who are not doing their job. The system for regular garbage pick-ups in the neighborhood is there, but the people employed by the sanitation department may not be implementing the system. Therefore, you do not attack a system, you attack Terry Smith, Director of Sanitation.

Remember the two sentences at the head of this section. Organizations have organized on some very strange issues, have won and built the organization. Some examples of these issues: shopping carts, bells on ice cream trucks, toilet paper at the school. None of these is earth shaking, but they were won, a constituency was built and the organization moved on to bigger issues.

Identifying Leaders

I have never had anyone come up to me and say, "Hi, I'm a leader and would like to lead your organization." Nor have I ever walked into a room and seen a person with a big "L" on the forehead. Finding and developing leadership is a slow process which sometimes results in success and as often in failure. It boils down to perseverance and hard work. However, there are some guidelines:

1. **Are they angry?** When they talk about issues, is it from emotional experience or an intellectual exercise? We have seen many smart and intelligent leaders, but without emotion these leaders will not put in the "kill." So we are always looking for those people who, in a face-to-face meeting, in a leadership meeting or in a public meeting, express anger. When you find that person, then provide the opportunity to show that anger in a public forum.

A word of caution: Watch out for the "Living Room Lions," the people who in their living room rant and rave about how they are going to tear the enemy limb from limb, but who in the confrontation end up like lambs. One time we found a person so angry at the planning meeting at his house that we made him the spokesperson when we went to the alderman's office. He seemed so strong that we did not even have a back-up leader! When we got to the alderman's office, he ended up sympathizing with the alderman on what a hard job it was to

be an alderman!

One way to avoid this is to give the potential leader a small role to play in a public meeting, such as presenting one of the demands, and see if the anger carries over to the public meeting.

2. **Will other people follow them?** I remember once being in a leadership meeting where the group was trying to decide on a course of action. Time and time again, the chairperson brought up a suggestion for action, and every time somebody found something wrong with the suggestion. After about an hour of this, one member of the group made a suggestion. The rest of the group immediately jumped at the suggestion and accepted it. In subsequent leadership meetings, we saw the same thing happen. It did not take too long to figure out that the real leader of the group was the person who sat back and timed her suggestion for action, made it, and then watched as the group accepted it.
3. **Will they take suggestions and directions from others?** Good leaders are not rigid; they are open for suggestions and adaptations of the strategy. They check with the group before agreeing to anything. Good leaders have a basic understanding that their power comes from the people and that they must stay in touch with the people if they are going to maintain their power.
4. **Will they take responsibility?** Are they willing to see that fliers get passed out, that phone calls get made, that letters are written? Are they willing to accept the decisions of the organization and then stand by their guns if they are attacked later? I recall a situation where a very tough demonstration was planned by the leadership. They all accepted it, endorsed it, and were part of carrying it out. It was fantastic! But we had stepped on some very big toes and strong reactions came from the city, the media and even some funding sources. The same leadership who had developed, accepted and carried out the demonstration soon began to disavow any part of it. No amount of talking and strategizing could make them see how close they were to victory. In addition to disavowing the action, they backed off the issue. It is interesting to note that none of those people is a leader today. Good leaders take responsibility for their own decisions and for the decisions and actions of the organization.
5. **What else?** Lots of things, such as having a constituency, being articulate, being aggressive, being sensitive, and on and on. The key as in all other endeavors is practice, learning by doing. Getting the experience first of presenting one demand, or presenting research to the organization, and then taking on increasing responsibilities. One does not become a professional athlete in one day or one week; it takes practice, experience and practice. The same is true of becoming a leader.

You must be continually on the lookout for good leaders and you must realize that some people can lead in certain situations, while other situations call for different leadership skills. A leader who is good in confrontation may not be good in negotiation. It is important to know the difference. The good organizer/leader recognizes this and uses leaders in situations

best suited to their particular skills.

Leadership Development

Most organizations talk a lot about leadership development; few of them have any systematic plan for leadership development. It is true that leadership is developed through actions and situations where they have to use leadership skills. However, an organization with a systematic plan for leadership development can give their leadership added tools to enhance their development.

One approach is to get a group of leadership together and ask them what skills they think need to be strengthened. Then you can either develop your own training design to address those areas, or contact an outside resource which provides training in those areas. You must get iron clad commitments from leadership that they will attend those sessions. Depending upon the organization's other agendas, schedule these sessions once per month, once every two months or once each quarter.

Some topics you might consider in a training program are:

1. How do I get more people to come to the meeting?
2. How can I improve my block club/issue group meeting?
3. How can I improve chairing a public meeting?
4. How do I develop a better agenda?
5. How do I improve my leadership skills in confrontation or a demonstration?
6. How do I improve my negotiation skills?
7. Developing winning strategies.
8. Developing issues.
9. Fund raising skills.

This should get you started. You will think of other topics. At the conclusion of this manual is a leadership and staff "task and skill check list" that may be of assistance to your organization.

In addition to the topic scheduled for the training, each session should include a time when the leadership strategizes about a specific organizing drive in which the organization is involved or hopes to develop in the near future. This will ensure that part of each session is not abstract, but relates directly to the life of the organization.

At the conclusion of each training session, the following questions should be discussed:

1. Has this session been helpful. Why/why not?
2. How would you improve the session?
3. What are you going to do differently because of this session?

It is important that someone keep good notes during this discussion. It will assist in developing better training designs, and will help keep each other accountable. For example, if a leader in response to question three says something like: "Because of this session, I'm going to demand yes or no answers to our demands," and if that leader at the next meeting reverts to old patterns of saying "please," he or she can be confronted with the statement from the training session.

Another approach, used effectively by one organizer, was to have breakfast with two of his leaders every Saturday morning. The

agenda was three-fold:

1. Review the past week's activities, with evaluation of production, victories, setbacks.
2. Review the coming week's activities, with assignment of responsibilities.
3. Strategy session on a particular issue, or a particular problem, or where the organization wanted to be in three months and how to get there.

Because of this process, the organizer, who had always prided himself on being better than average strategist, found that after three months those leaders had developed strategy skills which equaled (if not surpassed) his own.

Whatever approach is taken, the point is that if your organization wants to take leadership development seriously, something more is needed than just leadership meetings and evaluation meetings after public meetings. There must be a systematic, thought-out program of leadership development.

Leadership/Staff Roles

The relationship between staff and leadership is an important aspect of how well the organization functions. The basic ingredients of that relationship are trust and respect -- and that goes both ways.

Trust is built through performance, by doing what one has committed oneself to do, and this applies to both staff and leadership.

Respect, beyond the basic respect for another human being, comes through recognizing the unique gifts each person brings to a particular situation. There are things leadership does which I as staff cannot do, and there are things I as staff do which leadership cannot do. Rather than being threatened by this, we should recognize this as the basis of respect for the gifts each of us brings to the organization.

There are six arenas where staff works with leadership:

1. **One-on-One.** When staff is working with an inexperienced leader, the relationship would be one of trainer/trainee, where staff would take the leader through the steps of the meeting, preparing the leader for what may occur, and assist in understanding the importance of the group making a decision to do something.

With the experienced leader, the relationship is that of two professionals sharing insights and ideas about an issue or the organization, and developing a joint strategy to deal with the situation.

2. **Small Leadership Group.** This is usually a meeting where a small group of leaders develop the agenda for a meeting or a strategy for an event. In this arena, although leadership will make the final decisions, staff will probably play an active role, suggesting strategies and ideas--after all, the organization is paying for the staff's brains.
3. **Public Meeting.** If staff have done their job in preparing leaders in the leadership meeting, there should be little or no need for them to play an active role in this arena.
4. **Demonstration or Action.** Staff should stay close to key

leadership so they can quickly pull two or three leaders together to make decisions when necessary.

5. **Follow-up to Public Meetings and/or Demonstration.** In this arena, staff take an active role in assisting leadership evaluate what occurred and possibly start planning the next steps in the organizing drive.
6. **Negotiating Session.** In a negotiating session with the opponent, staff should stay very close to the organization's key negotiator to ensure that all important points are brought to the table.

Organizing a Block Club Or Small Issue Group

These groups are usually organized around a small local issue such as a bad building or potholes. Once that issue is resolved, they die or turn into a social club. However, they are valuable in that they bring people out and give them basic organizational experience. Even as they are working on their local issue, the group should be made aware of other aspects of the organization's life. This can be done by inviting key people from the group to a larger public meeting.

When setting up a meeting it is good to try to have it on the block or near where the issue is of concern. If you can't get a living room or basement, in the summer time go for a vacant lot or someone's yard or front porch.

After the issue has been identified, a place, date and time set, a couple of people should be brought together to talk about what is going to happen at the meeting. [If at all possible, get these people to hand out fliers and ring ten doorbells about the upcoming meeting. Neighbors are much better talking with neighbors than someone off the block.] These should usually be those people who seem to be the most upset by the issue. The basic format of this meeting follows that of a leadership meeting. (See next chapter.) But it must be remembered that these are new people who have little or no experience, so they will need a lot of assistance figuring out what they want and how to conduct the meeting.

It is usually not a good idea to have an enemy present at the first meeting of the block or issue group. The first meeting should be used to find out if there is interest in the issue, clarify what they want, and decide to invite out someone who can resolve the issue.

If at all possible, you want them to invite the enemy to the next meeting so they will gain the experience, and so that when victory is achieved they have done it through organizing. A tendency of new groups is to want to write a letter or make a phone call to ask someone to please do something about the problem. One way to deal with this problem is to have someone from another small issue group, who won by inviting someone to their meeting, come and share their experience. If this is not possible, you can try comments like these:

It is important that they see how many of us are interested in this issue.

It is very important that they come to the block and see first-hand how bad the problem is.

If they still end up just sending a letter, ensure they put some kind of

deadline or a response. In two weeks, when nothing has happened, they hopefully will be willing to invite the person to their next meeting.

It is important that the group decide to do something at the first meeting, even if it is only to write a letter asking someone to please do something. Once a group has made a decision to do something, it becomes a different group with a different personality; it is starting to build its group history. Your job is to ensure that it does not end with the writing of a letter.

If the group does decide to invite someone to the next meeting, a couple of people should meet to go over the agenda and how they want the meeting to run, and to decide what they will do if the enemy does not show up or does not give them what they want. Even if the leadership decides ahead of time that they are going to go to the enemy's home if he or she doesn't show up, new groups are usually hesitant to move that quickly. Some comments to make at this point are:

Well, since she didn't come to our meeting, let us take the meeting to her.

Well, maybe he forgot about the meeting. Let us send a committee to remind him.

Ideally, the entire group becomes the "committee." If they will not go to her home that night, then push very hard for a "committee" to go to her office the next day. Again, the "committee" is as many people as you can get to go. The important thing is that the group take action if the enemy is not dealing with them. This helps them learn early in their experience that this is a different type of organization, one that does not know the meaning of the word "no," and will take action against any enemy.

Once you have started working with a group, it is important that they win something very fast. Since this is their first experience with the organization, you want to ensure it is a positive one.

Frequently, when small groups meet someone will say: "There are only five of us here; let's meet next week when more people can come." That is disastrous! Next week you will be lucky to have three people at the meeting. One way to head this off is to suggest:

Let's take twenty minutes right now and everyone go out and ring five door bells to tell the neighbors that there is a meeting going on right now, and could they come over for just half an hour."

Small issue groups are means to an end. You are looking to make contacts and give people positive experiences in organizing so you can bring them into other larger issues with which the organization is dealing.

Leadership Meeting

The purpose of a leadership meeting is to develop an agenda for a specific meeting and/or strategy on a certain issue. This type of meeting is usually small, 4-10 people, and usually by invitation. This is done not to shut anyone out but so the meeting can remain focused. Obviously, the people who come to this meeting should represent the constituency so the strategy they develop will be acceptable to that constituency.

It is helpful if one or two people have given some thought to the meeting before it starts and perhaps even are ready to offer a plan of action so people have something to react to immediately. Leadership meetings which start: "Well, we have a rat problem, what do you want to do?" will probably take at least an hour to focus on anything specific.

Meetings which start: "We have a problem with rats and I think we should have a meeting in two weeks where we invite Mr. Smith, Head of Rodent Control" will get off the ground much quicker and focus in on the demands, as opposed to a discussion for an hour whether we should invite Smith, Head of Rodent Control or the Mayor.

Things that should be accomplished in a leadership meeting:

1. Update on the issue; any new information
2. Review and sharpen demands
3. Develop agenda
4. Assign leadership tasks
 - Who is going to open and set up meeting place
 - Who is going to clean up the hall
 - Who is in charge of production
 - Who is in charge of the sign-in table
 - Who does what during the meeting: chairs the meeting, presents facts or information, presents demands, negotiates, does wrap-up
5. Do role play
6. Ask the "what if" questions and work out answers for each one
 - What do we do if the enemy doesn't come?
 - What do we do if they send an assistant?
 - What do we do if they say "yes" to demand one and "no" to demands two and three?
 - What do we do if they say it will take time
 - What do we do if they say "no" to everything?
 - What do we do if they say "yes" to everything? [It did happen to me once, and we were so unprepared that we almost blew the meeting.]
 - What do we do if they say, "We just don't have the power to do what you ask"?

Following is a sample agenda for a leadership meeting:

1. Call to order
2. Introductions
3. What is the issue?
4. Who can resolve the issue?
5. Specifically, what do we want?
6. Assignment of tasks: Who is going to do what? (See point 4, above.)
7. Role play
8. Asking the "what if" questions
9. Other

Public Meeting

There are two types of public meetings:

- The objective of the first type of public meeting is to impart information that will lead to action or some activity by the organization. An example of this would be a public meeting to let the community know about the loan practices of a particular

bank. This type of meeting should always end with a statement like this:

Now that we have the information we need, we'll invite the president of the bank out to a meeting next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. right here to get some straight answers.

YOU NEVER HAVE A PUBLIC MEETING JUST TO IMPART INFORMATION. YOU HAVE AN INFORMATION MEETING TO LEAD TO ACTION.

- The second type of public meeting is where the organization has invited a guest or "enemy" to make demands on that person or the agency that person represents.

The following guidelines apply to most public meetings:

Prior to the public meeting, there should be a leadership meeting. (See previous section.) There should also be a leadership briefing of all those actively involved in running the meeting about 30 minutes before the meeting. At this briefing, leadership can be updated on any new information, and responsibilities can be reviewed so everyone knows exactly what to do and when to do it.

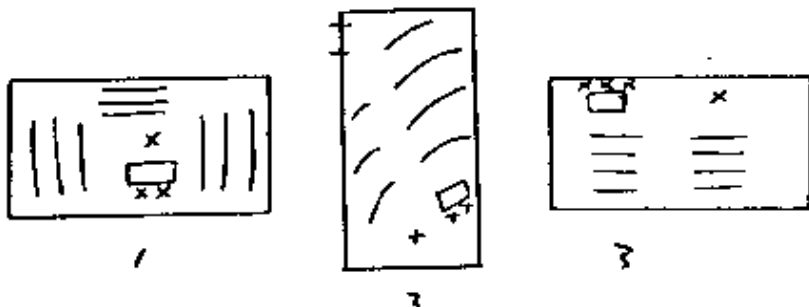
When people arrive, they should immediately pass by the sign-in table, be greeted, asked to sign in, and given an agenda. It is good if the person behind the sign-in table knows something about the issue and can make comments like:

This rat issue has gotten out of hand. We have to really be tough with Commissioner Smith so something is done immediately.

The atmosphere of the meeting room is important. It sets the tone for the whole meeting. Organizational signs, pictures and press from past organizing drives, and picket signs from past actions should be visible. This not only sets the tone, but also reminds your members of their history and quickly lets your enemy know you are an action-oriented organization.

Tips on Public Meetings

1. **Set up fewer chairs than you need.** It is very upsetting to your enemy to suddenly see people running around setting up more chairs. The thought goes through your enemy's mind: "My God, they have more people coming than they thought."
2. **Set up the hall** in a way that is intimidating to your enemy. Below are a couple of examples:



Note that in none of the examples does the enemy (X) have

the protection of a table. In Example 1, the enemy is surrounded, in Examples 2 and 3, he or she is far from the exit.

3. Protect the microphone.

- Never place a microphone in such a way that the enemy can control it. That means there is never a microphone on the enemy's table. If you do place a microphone on the enemy's table, ensure it is part of a system where it can be turned on and off at some other location. It is very upsetting to be talking and suddenly someone turns the microphone off.
- Leadership should be prepared to take away the microphone from an enemy who starts to run off at the mouth and is not addressing the issue.

4. Protect the podium. If you use a podium, do not let the enemy control it. If the enemy is allowed to use the podium, a leader should stand nearby or at least sit next to the podium, ready to take control. REMEMBER: IT IS *YOUR* MEETING!

5. Use props to demonstrate and dramatize your issue, such as pictures, graphs, charts. For example, if your meeting is about rats, you might present the enemy with a dead rat or, if that is too strong, with a rat trap so the enemy can catch all the rats in the community. Every issue can be dramatized if you put your mind to it.

When a bank in Chicago lost \$1.3 billion in speculative loans, an organization put together a very impressive chart showing how that money could have benefited Chicago if it had been invested there--in job creation, rehab loans, weatherization. In addition, the organization presented the bank with a plastic Bozo Clown with a sign around its neck saying, "Bank on Bozo." The Bank on Bozo award made the front page of the paper; the impressive research and chart were not even mentioned in the article.

6. If you expect press, ensure you have a leader who is not at the front table assigned to talk with the press. You cannot pull a leader away from the front table in the midst of negotiations, and you do not want the press walking up to someone and asking: "What is going on here tonight?" only to get the response, "Gee, I don't know. I came to play bingo--guess that is tomorrow night."

7. Have someone from your organization take pictures.

Photos make good props for future meetings and record your history.

###

A sample agenda appears next. Let's go through it point by point.

**WESTVIEW UNITED NEIGHBORS
123 W. Newberry
555-7788**

PUBLIC MEETING -- AUGUST 17, 19__ -- 7:30 PM

1. Welcome
2. Purpose of Meeting -- Personal testimony

3. Introduction of Mr. Smith, Head of Rodent Control, who has the authority to give us what we want.
 4. Demands:
 - o We want the alleys in Westview baited for rats two times in the next two weeks.
YES___ NO___
 - o We want the alleys in Westview baited for rats once per month after the initial two weeks.
YES___ NO___
 5. Response by Mr. Smith
 6. Review of agreements
 7. Other
 8. Adjourn
-

1. **Welcome** This is a good place to give a very new person the opportunity to stand up in front of a group. Or it can provide a chance to give a pat on the back to someone who normally wouldn't be up in front: "Mrs. Jones, who sold the most raffle tickets for our fund raiser, will welcome us tonight."
2. **Purpose of Meeting** This should be a strong presentation about the seriousness of the problem and the need for immediate action on the part of the enemy so the community once again is safe. This can be the place where props, facts, charts, and graphs are used.

Personal Testimony This is a person or persons in the audience who know they are going to be called on to tell their story in their own words. This humanizes an issue and takes it out of the realm of statistics. After the people assigned to talk have done so, it may open up the audience for more people to talk about the issue. That is fine, but the chair must ensure the presentations stay on the issue at hand and that they do not go on forever. One way the chair can move the meeting back to the agenda is by making a comment like:

The fact that so many people have spoken and several more have their hands up is an indication of how serious this situation has become. I think it is time we find out what Mr. Smith is going to do about it!

3. **Introduction of Mr. Smith** When Smith is introduced, it is important to make clear just who he is and what power he has. He is the one who can solve the problem! Smith does not talk at this point. As soon as he is introduced, the meeting moves straight to the demands.
4. **Demands** Demands can be presented all at once, or one demand at a time can be presented and negotiated before you go on to the following demands. Whichever way it is done, only negotiate one demand at a time. Leadership should continue to remind Smith and the audience which demand is being negotiated: "We are asking about the first demand. Yes or No?"

A helpful technique at this point is to have a large score card at the front of the meeting hall with the demands listed and "YES___ NO___" following the demand. As answers and commitments are made, leadership can check them off.

5. **Response by Smith** This is the first time Smith gets to speak.

A strong leader should keep talking specifically about the demands. We have had public officials come to meetings on city services who try to talk about the World's Fair or, worse, the Cubs! Keep them on the demands.

Remember that comments like:

We will do the best we can.

We certainly want to improve our service.

We will look into the situation.

You have to understand our problems.

...and fifty more like them are at best dodges and in reality, lies. Don't accept them. No parents would accept from their teenager going on a first date the comment: "I'll try to get home as early as I can." You cannot let your enemy at a public meeting act like a teenager. That is why you always try to frame your demand in a Yes/No manner; it removes the gray area.

- 6. Review the Agreements** If acceptable agreements have been reached, they are reviewed and reconfirmed with Smith. If at all possible, get Smith to sign the agreement right there at the meeting. If that is not possible, ensure a letter of confirmation is mailed right after the meeting.

If no agreements have been reached, or at least none that is satisfactory to the leadership, the leadership excuses Smith from the meeting, since the strategy of what to do in that case was worked out at the leadership meeting. Once Smith has left, leadership makes an announcement:

People like Smith really get me! We pay his salary and he seems to think we like rats running around and biting our children. Well, we are going over his head. Right to the Mayor! We will meet here at the church tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. and will get to the Mayor's office at 10:45 a.m. I'm passing a sign-in sheet right now for you to sign up to go with us.

- 7. Other** During a meeting someone may stand up and try to change the subject:

Rats may be a problem, but my mother got mugged last night When is this organization going to do something about crime?

If the leadership allows the discussion to go on about crime, you will never get back to the issues of rats. However, if leadership does not deal with it, you are telling someone it is not important that "mother got mugged." When questions, comments, and issues come up which are off the stated topic of the meeting, leadership can say:

That is serious, and we are going to do something about it. Please bring it up again when we get to "other" on the agenda so we can deal with it adequately.

Having "other" listed on the agenda gives leadership a tool to keep the meeting focused on the issue at hand. Also, if you get to this point in the agenda and still have time, it is good to open it up to the audience. You may just find your next organizing drive because someone brings up an issue at this point in the meeting.

8. **Announce Next Meeting or Action** Provide date, time, and place. Thank people for coming, and adjourn.

9. **You Are Not Through Yet!** Following the meeting:

- Clean up the hall -- you might want to use it again. Before the meeting, find out what clean-up means. Should the chairs be arranged a certain way? Must the floor be swept? Where do we leave the keys? There is no faster way to lose a meeting place than to leave it a mess or even in some manner that is displeasing to whoever is in charge of the hall.
- Leadership gets together and evaluates the meeting. The evaluation occurs through asking questions:
 - What did we win?
 - Where were we the strongest?
 - Where were we the weakest?
 - How could we improve on the weak part?
 - If we could do it over again, what would we do differently?
 - Could we have done anything else to get more people there?
 - What follow-up must we do, and who is going to do it?
- Organize the sign-in sheets and get the new names, addresses and phone numbers into the file.

Check List for the Public Meeting

1. Who has the key for the meeting room?
2. Is the hall set up? What must we do to clean up?
3. Agenda
4. Sign-in sheets.
5. Is each leader aware of what he or she must do? Assign someone to deal with:
 - Sign-in table
 - Press
 - Police (if it is an action)
 - Roles in the actual meeting
6. Are props needed? Who is bringing them?
7. Any special handouts in addition to the agenda?

8. Who needs rides? Who are providing them?
9. If you are using a sound system, does someone know how to operate it? The same for movie projectors, etc.
10. After the meeting, pick up the sign-in sheets, get new names into the file. Write any necessary letters of confirmation.

Organizing a Demonstration

There is always a purpose for a demonstration. The enemy has refused to meet or has met and refused to negotiate. Through a demonstration, the organization seeks to put pressure on the enemy by going to his or her home, place of business, church, golf course, parents' home, etc.

Most of the elements used in preparing for a public meeting also apply to preparing for a demonstration. However, there are some special considerations in preparing for a demonstration.

1. **Scouting** If the demonstration is to take place at a location where the organization has never been, someone should go there to find out how to get there and what to expect once you do get there. For example, if you plan to go to a slumlord's house and the strategy is to go up on the front porch and start singing, it would be helpful to know that there is fence around the house and a sign on the gate that says, "Beware, Attack Dog On Duty." That information might change the strategy of going up on the front porch.

If you are going to an office located in a high rise, you will need to know the best route to the office once you are inside the building. Stopping to ask directions with 30 people might tip someone off that something is up. You also want to know how tight the security is and, if possible, the actual layout of the office where you are going.

An organization was planning a demonstration on a corporation which had a very prestigious address. When a scouting visit was made to the office, it was discovered that the office was little more than a mailing address and a phone answering service. The organization would have looked pretty foolish charging into an office that had only one person in it to open mail and answer the phone. Scouting saved the day and a different strategy was developed and a successful demonstration held at the home of one of the corporation's directors.

2. **Preparing your people** Before leaving for the demonstration, the leadership should prepare people by going over the history of the issue, why you are going to demonstrate, what to expect from the police, which leader is going to have what responsibility, and what you want out of the demonstration. It may be that the only reason you are going on the demonstration is to get the enemy to come to a public meeting and that you do not want to negotiate demands regarding the issue at this time. If that is the case, then everyone should be aware of it.
3. **Letting other people know who you are and why you are there** When you have a demonstration, you want passers-by and neighbors to know who you are and why you are

demonstrating. This is usually done with signs, placards, and fliers. Fliers should be simple and to the point.

SAMPLE FLIER

We are in your neighborhood because your neighbor, Mr. Sam Smith, 1215 Honeycut, 245-9045, owns property in our community and refuses to meet with us to discuss his plans to fix it up

If you do not want us back in your neighborhood, call Mr. Smith, 245-9045 and tell him to fix up his property

ABC ORGANIZATION, 123 WHEAT STREET, 555-0867

Whenever we go to someone's home, we always start by ringing doorbells and passing out flyers, simply saying, "I would like you to read this and please make the phone call." Then walk away. This raises the curiosity of the resident, who probably will read it.

Let's look at the flier. The first sentence gives information as to why you are there and implies that Smith is a slumlord. The second sentence appeals to the self-interest of his neighbors -- they may not care about Smith's building or your community, but for sure they do not want you back in their community. So, before you get to Smith's house he probably will get a couple of angry calls because "those people" were at the front door and, as far as they are concerned, it is Smith's fault. The last paragraph identifies the organization and a way you can be contacted. That may get you some irate phone calls the next day, but some other interesting things may happen.

Once, after an action, we got a letter saying, "I have always hated Smith. Keep up the good work." And inside was a twenty-dollar bill. Another time, after passing out fliers at a church, we got a call from the Social Concerns Committee saying they didn't think Mr. Smith was a slumlord. We invited them to come and take a tour of the building. They did and were shocked. Shortly after that, work began on the building. We later learned that at a women's club meeting of the church the topic of the slum building came up for discussion. Smith's wife was at the meeting. He no doubt got an earful that night, and we got the building fixed up.

4. **Dealing with the police** Someone should be assigned and prepared to deal with the police You can usually keep your action going an extra ten or fifteen minutes if this person does the job well.

- o First, explain who you are and why you are there.
- o If at all possible, apply the issue to the officer.

I'm sure that you wouldn't want to live next door to a building like this.

I can't believe that you are not upset when you get your

heating bill. On a policeman's salary, you have got to have just as hard of a time paying for it as we do.

- Then appear to be reasonable.

Look, all we want is to talk with the guy. If he agrees to come to a meeting next Tuesday, we will leave.

This often results in the police going into the home or office and presenting your offer. Even if it isn't accepted, it has gained you another ten minutes of demonstrating and has shown your organization to be reasonable.

- When the police say, "If you don't leave, we will arrest you," it is time to leave (unless, of course, the strategy is to get arrested). Your issue is not the police, and at that point an arrest is a distraction from the issue.
 - Police have a job to do. We may not like the job they have to do, but they have to do it. Our experience has been that if you don't try to provoke them they will hang pretty loose. After all, an arrest means reports for them.
5. **Songs and chants** Songs and chants are helpful in a demonstration; they keep spirits up and build a sense of solidarity. Noise also attracts attention and creates a disturbance for which your enemy will be blamed. Songs and chants are particularly important if you expect most of your people will be outside for some time while a negotiating team is inside.
6. **General hints** In most cases you should try to keep everyone together; there is strength in numbers. Occasionally, because of the physical layout of a building, you may have to split up into two groups. If so, ensure each group has a leader and assign someone to run back and forth between the two groups so everyone is kept updated on what is happening.

Frequently the enemy will make an offer to meet with a "few" people. After negotiating the number that will be in the meeting, it is in most cases good to take such a meeting. It is a recognition of your power and a sign of weakness on the part of your enemy.

When a negotiating team goes into a meeting, they do not make any agreements without checking with the folks outside, unless they achieve a clear victory. Another means of handling this is to have the enemy come out and make the offer to the crowd. This keeps your leadership from being in the middle.

If at all possible, it is very helpful to the group outside if someone can come out every 10-15 minutes to let them know what is going on inside. It is a lot easier for me to chant my lungs out if I know the enemy is weakening and that if we stick with it for a little longer we stand a good chance of winning.

When the negotiating team goes in, a recognized leader should stay outside to lead the chants and songs and be ready to deal with the police or the press.

Before breaking up any demonstration, the leadership reviews, in front of the whole group, what has happened, what was accomplished, and/or what the necessary next steps in the

organizing drive are. This wrap-up should also thank people for coming out.

Following the demonstration, leadership should get together to ask themselves the same questions which are asked following a public meeting.

Negotiation

This is the critical point in the organizing drive, because this is where you either bring home the bacon or lose it.

1. **Always negotiate from an ongoing position of power.** This can take many forms. It may mean having the meeting in the community rather than downtown. If the opponent has said he or she will meet with only five people, it may mean meeting with five people, but having 50 people outside singing and chanting helps. It may mean that you demand that your enemy come out to the community to announce the agreements reached. It may mean a joint press conference to announce the agreement.

2. **Only negotiate with power.** Ensure the person you are dealing with has the authority and power to do what you want. If someone sends an assistant to a meeting, the first question that should be asked is, "Do you have the full power and authority of your boss?" or, "Will agreements reached with you be fully honored by your boss?" It makes no sense to negotiate a bank's loan policies with the guard at the front door.

3. **Negotiate specifics -- know exactly what you want.**

- If possible, frame each demand in a yes or no manner:

Will you have the streets swept in the day -- yes or no?

This gets rid of the grey areas, the "maybes", and "we will try."

- Prioritize your demands: Which ones must you absolutely win, which ones can you compromise on, and which ones can you throw away?
- Negotiate one point at a time. Don't jump from point one to point three and back again. This confuses people and lets your enemy off the hook. Stick with one point until it is resolved or you make the judgement that you can get no more movement from your enemy. Only then do you move to the next point.
- Only negotiate specifics! No union goes into the bargaining room with "We would like a raise." They have a very specific demand of so much increase per hour. So, you don't go to a meeting and ask, "Can you sweep the streets?" because the answer will be 'Yes ... in 10 years!'

4. **Prepare carefully for negotiations.**

- Know and use your research. Facts and figures are necessary, but be sure to back them up with real life

examples. The fact that 50 people froze to death last year because of gas shut-offs is very impressive, but probably not as effective as a neighbor telling how he or she found Mrs. Jones frozen to death in her apartment because of a shut-off.

- Set deadlines. An agreement from a slum landlord that he is going to fix up his building without deadlines for completion is absolutely worthless.
 - Have alternate strategies, fall-back positions decided and agreed upon ahead of time so that if the enemy makes a counter offer, the group will be prepared.
 - Role play. Assign the roles of your team and the enemy, and role play how you feel the negotiations will go. This gives your team first-hand experience in dealing with the questions and objections of your enemy.
 - Anticipate your enemy. "When we say this, what is her response going to be and how do we answer?"
5. **Assign a chief negotiator and support roles.** Everyone should know who the chief negotiator is and what role each person is going to play in the negotiations.
 6. **If necessary, use the caucus.** If something unexpected comes up, do not hesitate to withdraw from the table, discuss the situation, come to agreement, and go back to negotiations. Overuse of the caucus will, however, show weakness, indecision, and sloppy preparation.
 7. **Every agreement must have a follow-up.**
 1. *Disclosure* Determine what facts or information must be disclosed to ensure that agreements which have been reached are being kept.
 2. *Accountability* How is the enemy going to be held accountable?
 - Written information?
 - Follow-up meeting in 30 days?
 - Reports?
 - Tours and inspections?
 8. **Get confirmation of agreements in writing.** This may take the form of the enemy signing the demand sheet, or it may mean that an agreement is drawn up which is signed by both parties. If this is not possible, then the organization should immediately send a letter of confirmation to the enemy:

It is our understanding from the meeting last night that you agreed to fix up your property at 256 W. May Street by Sept. 15, 19__ and that you will meet ABC Organization at the building at 2:30 p.m., Sept. 16, 19__ to inspect the repairs.
 9. **Keep your constituency informed.** This can be done with mailings, newsletters, or update at other meetings of the organization. This is particularly important if the negotiations take several weeks and are conducted with just a leadership team. If negotiations break down and your constituency is not informed, it will be hard to bring them back into the fight.

- Celebrate the victory!** Have a party, give an award, celebrate! For, as Vince Lombardi said:

WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING -- IT'S THE ONLY THING!

Presenting Facts and Research

There are three essential guidelines to follow when presenting facts and research:

- Present it in categories people can understand.** A bank in Chicago lost \$1.3 billion in speculative oil loans. No one has a category for \$1.3 billion; I know it is a lot of money, but that is about all. The loss had to be translated into categories to which people could relate. The following is a portion of a fact sheet which was developed:

 The \$1.3 billion in "Non Performing Loans," the bank's term for loans which have gone belly up, could have benefited Chicago in the following ways:

NUMBER OF LOANS	AMOUNT	PRODUCTIVE USE
26,000	\$50,000	1st Mortgages
260,000	5,000	Rehab Loans
650	2,000,000	Multi-unit Rehab Loans
520,000	2,500	Weatherization Loans

Or, they could have just given every Chicago resident \$\$371.00, which would have been reinvested in Chicago's economy rather than being gambled away on bad loans.

As was mentioned earlier, this entire fact sheet was ignored by the press; but it was used in countless community meetings, and people were able to understand the enormity of the loss because it was translated into categories they could grasp and deal with.

- Translate your facts into categories that relate to my pocketbook.** If a utility goes in for a 20% rate hike that will cost consumers \$10,000,000, the following fact sheet relates to my pocketbook.

If your current monthly heating bill is:	After the 20% rate hike you will pay:	In one year your bill will have increased by:
\$100	\$120	\$240
\$200	\$240	\$480
\$300	\$360	\$720

I really can't understand \$10,000,000, but I can get mad as hell about \$240 dollars. This type of fact sheet is also good because no matter what I paid in the past, I can fit myself into a category and see just about how much the rate hike is going to cost me.

- Make it as personal as possible,** either in identifying the enemy or in making the issue personal as opposed to statistical.

One good way to personalize the enemy is to list his or her salary.

Mr. Jones gets paid \$42,000 per year as head of street repairs, yet we have potholes all over our community. Why are we paying Jones for not doing his job?

People armed with this information get angry very quickly. First, they probably are not making as much as Jones. Second, it is their tax dollars which are paying Jones. Third, they know that if they didn't do their job they would get fired. Jones is not doing his job and is still getting paid.

In personalizing the issue, turn numbers into human interest stories.

We have to pass Bill 1142 to stop farm foreclosures.

CONTACT SENATOR BILL SMITH, CAPITOL BUILDING, MIDTOWN,
234-7856 -- TELL HIM TO VOTE 'YES' ON 1142!

Did you know that 249 family farms have been foreclosed since the first of the year? That is 10 farms per week. But those figures don't tell the untold agony of foreclosures.

Two months ago the Johnson farm was foreclosed:

-- The 240-acre farm had been in the family for three generations.

-- Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had always dreamed that their children would carry on the proud tradition of family farming. That dream is dead.

-- Due to the stress Mr. Johnson had a heart attack. Now, for the first time in his life, he is on public assistance.

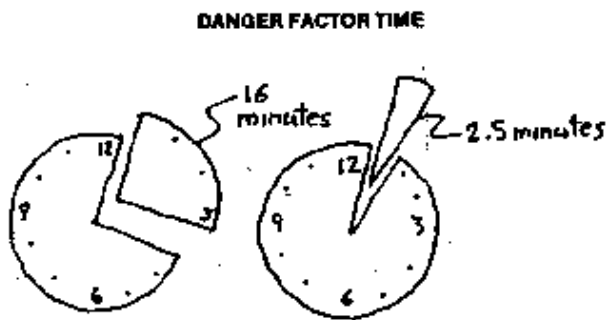
-- Their daughter, Arny, had to drop out of college to come home to help care for her father.

That is just one of 249 horror stories. Make sure you work to get Bill 1142 passed or you could be number 250.

When you are making a fact sheet like the one above, ensure it is okay with the person or family before you start spreading their personal life around the community.

Those are the basic three guidelines to follow. One last point on presenting research: An effective way is to use a graph, which, if well done, tells your story for you.

When you call the police in our community, it takes an average of 16 minutes to get to our front door.



When you call the police in the Rolling Hills community, it takes an average of 2.5 minutes to get to the front door.

Ours and theirs!

That is a difference of 13.5 minutes, a difference which could mean the difference between life and death for you and your family.

We are here tonight to demand of Commander Smith that response time in our community be cut to 2.5 minutes. What is good for Rolling Hills is good for us.

Remember, the purpose for presenting facts and research, however you present them, is to strengthen your position, weaken your enemy's position, and to get people angry enough to participate in the organizing drive.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings are a time when the staff meet to strategize and get themselves focused. Obviously, any ideas, strategies, and decisions arrived at in a staff meeting must be cleared with leadership before they become part of the organization's agenda.

Some organizations arrange to have their staff meeting at a time when leadership can be present. This is fine as long as it is the same leadership each time so leaders start to have a history of the issues discussed. For organizations with limited staff or no staff, the following can also be used for a leadership team which meets on a regular basis.

Staff meetings serve several purposes and should be taken seriously. Each staff or participant should carefully prepare for the staff meeting.

1. **To provide accountability** If a staff person says he or she is going to have three meetings this week, next week the other staff should hear about the three meetings and what happened. If any of the three meetings did not happen, the staff person has to be pushed on why it did not happen. And the reason better be good! Commitments made at staff meetings should be taken very seriously. We expect that our enemies will lie to us and give us misinformation, but we should be able to expect that when one of our fellow staff makes a commitment, that commitment will not be violated.
2. **To get the total picture of the organization** and how my piece fits into the life of the organization. If one staff is having a public meeting on education, all staff in the organization should be producing people from their areas who they know are interested in education. Even though education may not be a big issue in the area for which one staff is responsible,

there may be a person in that area who is very interested in education. And because that person is asked to come to the meeting, that may just be the way he or she becomes involved with the organization.

3. **To get and give help in developing strategies** Good organizers think on their own, but they do not think in isolation. Some of the greatest times in staff meetings have been when we started to think of the most outrageous strategies possible. Sometimes they cannot be used because leadership does not agree, or they are simply too outrageous. But if you limit your discussion of strategies to only that which is possible, you will surely end up with only possible strategies. If you fantasize on impossible strategies, you may surprise yourself and do the impossible. Like the time we attacked a building on the lake shore from the front with buses and a marching band, from the lake with a rented boat, and overhead with an airplane carrying the organizational banner. It really did happen! But it would not have happened, had we not strategized the outrageous
4. **To get and share information** If one staff has had a public meeting with a certain public official and another staff is going to have a public meeting with the same official, information should be shared on what was learned at the first meeting. How did the official react to threats, demands, emotions, etc. Each public meeting is part of the history of the organization and, as much as possible, all staff and leadership should share that history and be able to use it to their advantage in the present.
5. **To be motivated and challenged** I have always liked competition among staff. For that reason, we will set up some form of competition for special events or particularly big meetings, or at a time when staff seems to be going stale.
 - Who can have the most people at a meeting?
 - Who can have the most people at meetings this week?
 - Who can have the most public meetings this week?
6. **To build a team spirit** This is done by producing for each other's meetings, by sharing in developing strategies, by jointly staffing an issue or a meeting and by recognizing that every meeting is important to the life of the organization. If one of my fellow staff or leadership is talking about a block club meeting, I should be just as attentive as if he or she were talking about a meeting of 500 people.

When you are conducting a staff meeting, whether it is a meeting of just staff, staff and leadership, or just leadership, the following are some of the questions that should be asked and answered:

Before the meeting

- What do you want out of this leadership/public meeting?
- What are the strategies that leadership has developed?
- What is the next step if the strategy doesn't work?
- How are people being produced?

After the meeting

- How many people were at the meeting?
 - Why so few?
 - How did you get so many?

- What did you win?
- What is the next step?
- What was the best thing that happened in the meeting?
- What was the worst thing that happened in the meeting?
- If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?
- Do you need any help with follow-up?

Staff meetings and leadership meetings are the life blood of an organization. Organizations which do not have staff and leadership meetings on a regular basis, or where they are not taken seriously, will flounder and drift for lack of direction and drive

Organizational Retreats

The purposes of organizational retreats are: a) to lay out a battle plan for the future of the organization: Where do you want the organization to be three, six, 12 months from now? b) To strategize issue and organizational development and, c) To assign specific tasks and goals: The finance committee will sponsor a fund raiser two months from now to raise \$1,000 for the organization.

When organizations go for an organizational retreat, leadership and staff often come away more frustrated than when they left because no one has put much planning into it. To avoid this, you might want to use the following sample agenda.

Financial

1. What is the organization's budget for next year?
2. What is the organization's anticipated income for next year?
 - List each source, amount, date to be received.
 - If income does not meet budget, what are the specific plans for getting additional income?
3. How many leaders are involved in fund raising?
 - In budget planning?
 - In writing proposals?
 - In finance calls?
 - In developing fund raising strategies?
 - In local fund raisers?
4. How much time does staff spend on fund raising?
 - If that is too much, how is the organization going to change it?

Leadership Development

1. What are the greatest strengths of leadership? How are those skills developed?
2. What are the greatest weaknesses and/or needs of leadership? What are the organization's specific plans for dealing with those weaknesses and/or needs?
3. Does the organization have a specific training plan for leadership?
 - If yes:
 - How many leaders participated?
 - What was their evaluation of the training?
 - Did the training accomplish what you wanted?
 - How can the training be improved?
 - If no: Why not? No need, no capacity, no interest, no time, other reasons?

4. Is there a leadership team that meets regularly to strategize on organizational development, issue development, leadership development, staff development, finances? If no, how are these topics brought into the life of the organization?

Staff Development

Ask questions 1-4, above, about staff. In addition:

5. Is there a specific means of keeping staff accountable to the organization, leadership, each other?

Organizational Development

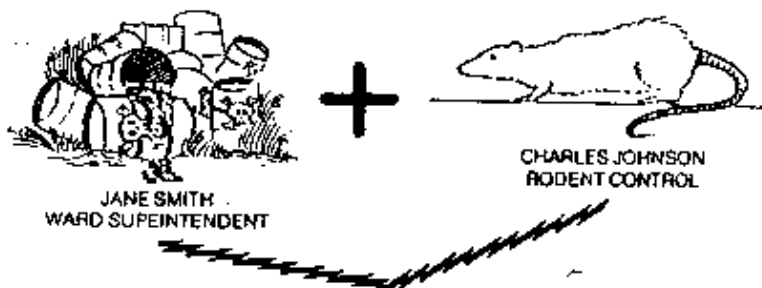
1. What specifically has the organization won in the last three months, six months, year?
2. What was the most significant victory?
3. How many meetings did the organization hold last month?
4. How many people attended those meetings?
5. What is the major issue for the organization at this point in history? Is there a battle plan for that issue?
6. What is the major need for the organization in the next three months, six months, year? How does the organization plan to address that need?

Fliers.

Basically, a flier should tell people:

1. 1. What the issue is
2. 2. When and where the meeting is
3. 3. If there are going to be any guests at the meeting
4. 4. The name of the organization and a phone number for more information

Keep them simple. If the meeting is about rats, don't tell me about the dangers of rats -- I know that! A good technique is to ask an obvious question. That forces me to react and respond to your flyer.



**WILL BE ATTENDING OUR MEETING
 THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 19____
 6058 S. GREEN (Mr. Allen's basement)
 6:30 P.M.**

**BRING YOUR DEMANDS — BRING YOUR IDEAS — BRING A FRIEND
 FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JOE — 555-5678
 SPONSORED BY 60th AND 61st GREEN STREET BLOCK CLUB**

Graphics are helpful in getting people's attention. Keep your fliers neat; messy looking fliers and misspelled words indicate a messy organization.

Do not depend upon fliers to produce people; the best they can do is to serve as a reminder. Even after fliers are passed out, you will want to organize a phone blitz where everyone in the file gets a phone call about the meeting. Another technique is to pass out fliers two or three days before the meeting. Then, on the night of the meeting, ring doorbells starting at the location of the meeting, and simply hand people the same flier, saying, "Just stopped by to remind you of the meeting. Hope you can make it."

You should be able to cover about 100 doors in an hour.

Newsletters

Depending upon the size and resources of your organization, you may already have a newsletter or you may be thinking of developing one. It may take the form of being typeset and printed with pictures or it may simply be one or two mimeographed pages.

Whatever the format, a newsletter should do the following things for the organization:

1. Inform people of upcoming meetings and actions
2. Acknowledge your victories and accomplishments
3. Clarify and present the organization's position on issues
4. Provide a platform and exposure for your leadership
5. Expose and ridicule your enemies
6. If you sell subscriptions and ads, pay for itself

There are a variety of possibilities for distributing your newsletter:

1. Pass them out at all meetings
2. Mail to people on your mailing list
3. Pass out through churches
4. Get small businesses to give them to their customers
5. Have them in laundromats
6. Have them inserted in the daily newspaper at local news stands

Another good use of your newsletter is to send it to your current and potential funding sources. If enough thought is given to it, the newsletter will document that you are a legitimate organization and that, because of your activities, the community is a better place. Your newsletter should also be sent to the media. They will not reprint articles from the newsletter, but this will start to give your organization credibility and the media may be more likely to print a media release later.

One caution with newsletters: Don't let them interfere with your organizing! "We can't have a meeting next week because we have to get the newsletter out." If it is a choice between organizing and getting the newsletter out, I cannot think of one situation where organizing would not be priority.

Working the Media

Media releases are sent out not so much in expectation that they will be printed as in hopes the media will attend the meeting or event and

give more extensive coverage. The release should be brief, hard hitting, and specific. Basically, it should state WHO, WHEN, WHERE, and WHAT.

If you were an assignment editor, which of the following releases would make you assign a reporter to cover the meeting -- Example 1 or Example 2?

Example 1

The ABC organization is pleased to announce that City Planning Director Smith has agreed to attend a meeting on Tuesday, October 12, 19__, 7:30 PM, at St. John s Church, 24 E. Church Street. This meeting is important because it will be the first time that ABC will have the opportunity to ask Director Smith about the proposed expressway and present ideas about how it can be changed so it won't mean demolishing so many homes.

Example 2

The ABC organization announces an historic event! City Planning Director Smith, for the first time, has agreed to meet with the community on Tuesday October 12, 19__ 7:30 PM at St. John's Church, 24 E Church Street, about the proposed expressway.

Mary Brown, a resident, reflects the mood of ABC when she commented: "It Smith thinks he is going to knock down my home he has another thing coming. Smith better have some answers or this meeting is going to get ugly fast!"

Sarah Jones, President of ABC stated: "Smith's plan for the expressway is not only stupid, it is obscene. At this meeting we will reveal ABC's alternative plan which will not only save the taxpayers millions, but will also avoid the senseless destruction of homes. We are sure that Smith will see the wisdom of our plan, but if he does not, then it is all out war!"

For more information, contact Sarah Jones, 555-9074

The second release is obviously better: It is not a meeting; it is an historic event. It is not a meeting to "discuss," but a meeting that could get ugly and might even develop into a declaration of war. The second release includes the human element of quotes and shows the level of anger in the community. An assignment editor reading the first release would say, "Who cares?" Reading the second release, he or she is more likely to respond, "This looks hot; we'd better cover it."

The day of the meeting, all media people who were mailed a release should be called and asked if they received it and if they plan on assigning someone to cover the meeting. If the answer is no, then an attempt should be made to convince them they will be missing something big. Comments such as the following may help:

There will be over 100 people there.

Well, I have never seen the community so angry; it should be an exciting meeting.

Channel Two said they were covering it.

When The Media Comes to the Meeting

Someone should be assigned to watch for the media. When they arrive, that person should briefly and clearly explain the issue and what is currently happening in the meeting. It is good to have a fact sheet to give reporters which they can use when they get back to their office. If at all possible, the person who initially talks with the media should know other people the media can talk with about the issue. If the media leaves before the end of the meeting, be sure to call them with the results.

When dealing with TV, keep your comments short and to the point. No speeches, they will end up on the cutting room floor. Make brief, sharp statements and let them ask the next question.

We are at Mr. Jones' home tonight because he owns property in our community and refuses to fix it up.

Don't get distracted from the issue.

Reporter: *Mr. Jones said your group is a communist front. What is your response to that?*

Leader: *I know I have to keep my home up to code, and I think Jones should have to do the same thing.*

Reporter: *But what about the charges of being communist?*

Leader: *His accusations do not change the fact that he owns some very badly deteriorated property in our community and ABC wants to know when he is going to fix it up.*

When dealing with TV, attempt to get your organization's name not only mentioned but also shown as part of the visual. This can be done by having the interview done in front of a sign with the organization's name on it or by having leadership wearing organizational buttons. At a demonstration, have a small child carry a sign with the organization's name on it. If any babies are present at a public meeting, make sure they have an organizational button, particularly if they are sleeping. For some inexplicable reason, the media love that.

Special or Feature Article When you are seeking a special article on your issue or organization, a face-to-face meeting with the reporter is essential. At this meeting, assume the reporter knows nothing about the issue or your organization.

Any charts and graphs you can leave with the reporter in addition to fact sheets are helpful. It saves them work and gives the appearance you really have done your homework. Also, have the names and phone numbers of people who are directly affected by the issue. These contacts give the reporter a human interest slant. Of course, ensure you have talked with these people ahead of time so they are prepared if a reporter calls them.

Do as much work as possible for the reporter. The more facts, figures, information, and contacts you can provide, the better are your chances for a story.

Do not assume your organization's name will appear in the article. Ask if the organization's name could be in the lead sentence (headline would be even better), or if this particular quote from the president of the organization could be used.

Remember that reporters like to think they are objective. Even though you obviously want to slant the story your way, you have to appear reasonable in your presentation. Something like the following might be appropriate:

Now, if you talk with City Planning Director Smith, he is probably going to say we were abusive at the meeting and that our plan for the expressway is amateurish. I have to admit the meeting got stormy, but you have to remember that we are talking about people's homes. The people in our community believe that 'your home is your castle.' I'll bet Smith would be mad if someone said they were going to knock down his home. I know that we are not planners, but we showed our plan to Dr. Jones who teaches City Planning at the University and she seems to think it has some merit. Here is a copy of our plan, Dr. Jones' phone number, and the names and numbers of 10 residents you might want to talk with about the issue. Also, Father Brown of St. John's said he would be willing to talk with you about the impact of the expressway on his parish.

This will get you a lot further and puts you in a better position than: "Smith is a jerk who doesn't care anything about us."

Exclusives This means you are giving the story to only one member of the media.

An organization in Chicago was getting little or no coverage from any of the media. They called a reporter and said they wanted to give him an exclusive. They got a very good article in one of the daily papers. The organization gave three more exclusives to the same paper. Other media began to call the organization to complain the organization was discriminating against them and that they wanted it stopped!

When you give an exclusive, your bargaining power is greatly strengthened. You can ask for the organization's name in the headline, or for space on the front page. Although the reporter doesn't have the power to give this, he or she can ask for it and, with the promise of more exclusives, might even fight for it.

Continue to Send Media Releases Even if a particular member of the media doesn't cover you, continue to send media releases, unless you are icing them out through the use of exclusives.

For almost a year, one TV station never covered us even though they had regularly received our media releases. One day out of the blue, we got a phone call from a reporter stating she had been going through the files and had found more than 50 media releases from us -- Who were we, and what did we do? She eventually came out and did a special report on us which was a feature story on prime time news.

Public Service Announcements Radio and TV stations all have public service announcements (PSAs). Usually, PSAs have to be handed in several weeks in advance and are run at prime time like 2:00 a.m. But there are a lot of insomniacs in this world; some may

even be interested in your organization. Each station has its own policy; the organization should be familiar with each station's policy.

Editorials and Op-Eds If the issue is big enough or has had enough exposure in the media, it may be that you can get an editorial on TV or an article on the Op-Ed page of the paper. These are more likely to run at prime time and get you very good exposure. Ideally, someone replies to your editorial and then you may be able to come back with a reply to the reply.

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Lastly, don't lie to the media! If you are only going to have 50 people at a meeting, don't say 500. If you tell them you are going to the mayor's house, make sure you go. If there are 150 people affected by the issue, you may be able to say 250, but don't tell them 10,000. If you give an exclusive, honor it and make sure you don't give the story to any other media.

You want to build a credible image of an organization that does its homework, has the straight facts, can present them well, and does what it says it is going to do.

Task and Skill Check List

Some reasons why staff should fill out this checklist:

1. To find out what we do versus what our leaders do.
2. To find out what personally we need/want to learn.
3. To find out what we want to train our leaders to do.
4. To find out what our leaders want/need to learn.

Here's how to fill out the checklist:

1. Identify three specific leaders you work with.
2. Fill out each task and skill checklist for yourself and each of your three leaders based on the following skill levels:

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X -- Never did task
1 -- Excellent
2 -- Fair
3 -- Poor
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3. Mark with a check in the last column things you should start getting your leaders to do.
4. Mark with a check in the first column things you as a staff want to improve.

[NOTE: You may want to develop your own task and skill checklist to serve your specific needs better. It takes time and effort but we have found it to be time and effort well spent Staff who use such a check sheet are usually surprised to see how much more leadership could be doing. And when approached in the proper manner leadership is usually willing to do more than they are at the present time.]

Task/skill	I want to improve	Skill level	Leader should be doing
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DOOR KNOCKING

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--to sell an issue
--to find an issue
--to produce people
  getting someone to door-knock with you
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MAKING AGENDAS

- leadership agenda
- block club agenda
- public meeting agenda
- evaluation agenda
- staff meeting agenda

WRITING LETTERS

- letters of invitation
- letters of confirmation
- letters to request information

MAKING FLIERS

- announcing a block club meeting
- major public meeting flier
- action/demonstration flier
- victory flier
- working equipment, typewriter, mimeo, etc.
- writing church bulletin announcement

PHONE CALLS

- confirming guest attendance
- getting information
- inviting people to meetings

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- working sign-in table
- setting up meeting room
- briefing leadership before meeting
- debriefing leadership after meeting
- cleaning up after meeting

RESEARCH

- going downtown, library, city hall
- title searches
- calling for information
- making fact sheets
- making graphs and charts

NEWSLETTER

- writing articles
- taking pictures
- layout
- deciding on content
- distributing issues

FUND RAISING

- researching potential funders
- writing proposals
- calling for appointments
- meeting with funders writing funding reports writing thank you letters
- organizing local fund raiser

MEDIA

- writing media releases
- making media calls
- writing PSAs
- talking with the media at meetings
- working the media at meetings and actions

ISSUE INFORMATION

- Understanding special city programs and how they work, such as CDBG, low-interest loan program, weatherization program, etc.
- Who has the power and responsibility for city services: garbage pick-ups, rats, stray dogs, abandoned buildings, street lighting, stop signs, etc.
- Understanding other agencies that the organization may have to deal with: local hospital, police department, local utility, board of education, etc.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

- chairing a meeting
- facilitating a planning meeting
- presenting research
- presenting a demand
- negotiating a demand
- giving official testimony
- opening a meeting
- closing a meeting
- working with the crowd
- defending organization
- selling organization

MISCELLANEOUS

- writing testimony
- strategizing issues
- developing battle plan for issues
- coordinating rides
- setting personal goals
- setting organizational goals

Conclusion

There is an ancient Chinese saying: "Talking will not cook the rice." Reading this manual, understanding this manual, will not organize your community. It is only by someone actually cooking the rice that the rice gets cooked; and it is only by someone actually organizing the neighborhood that communities get organized.

Another way of saying this was expressed to me by an organizer who stated, "People have to be willing to put their dreams into action."

Whichever analogy you respond to, the reality is that unless someone -- i.e., you and your neighbors -- are willing to do the hard work of organizing your community, outside forces will determine the future of your neighborhood.

With that hard work, however, comes the dignity of power and the excitement of winning. So, give 'em hell!!

ORGANIZE!

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