

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE BASE-BUILDING ON CAMPUS & BEYOND

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MOTIVATE YOUR BASE

Give people in your community a good reason to join you! Even when your group is acting for the greater good, it is critical that each member be personally invested in the outcome of your struggle. If your base is clear on what motivates them, they are less likely to step away from organizing when things get difficult. Try to understand what might motivate your members. Remember, none of these reasons are inherently bad—someone who only shows up for a free meal might stick around!

POTENTIAL MOTIVATIONS

- Strongly held values
- Directly affected by the injustice or close to somebody who is
- Interest in a reward like a t-shirt, meal, or new skill
- Desire to make friends or find community

WHY PEOPLE MIGHT STAY AWAY

- Noticeable disorganization
- Appearance of unfair exclusion or cliquiness
- No feeling of personal connection to the issue

Show anyone on the fence why they align with you and not your opposition. This doesn't mean catering to those who don't share your values and principles, it means turning sympathy into active membership. Think outside of your personal network: Who else could you reach out to that you don't already know? Who's not here that you would like to show up, and why aren't they here yet?

Organizing is about building community between those with shared goals and values.

DO: Build relationships with the people you need to show up; Screen people by getting to know them

DON'T: Push your base away over small disagreements; Screen through impersonal means

ENGAGE YOUR BASE

As you seek to strengthen and expand your network, it is important to sustain your base by actively engaging them and making sure they feel involved.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUR BASE

- Hold community-building events. Entice participation with food, interactive activities, give-aways, or exciting speakers. Give people time to get to know one another.
- Hold general meetings (as opposed to smaller core meetings) to strategize on big campaign questions with your base. Make sure you have a clear agenda and concrete next steps.
- Ensure that at every public-facing event, you provide attendees with a way to connect with your organization and get more involved. This could be a contact card, background materials, or an advertisement for your next event.

- Continue to provide political education. Give your base resources and talking points to distribute. This way you are not only educating your base, but also expanding your reach.
- Take action in coalition. Give your base opportunities to act in ways that feel meaningful and strategic for them.
- Show up for people in your base when they ask you to do so. Provide support if they face disciplinary or legal consequences as a result of involvement in your organization's activities.
- Get to know your base! Talk to as many sympathetic people as possible, and record contact information for the folks who show up to your events.
- Give those in your base concrete action steps to take, such as tabling, writing a letter, or asking their friends to show up to an action.
- Mobilize people through direct one-on-one outreach. Speaking to people in person can help ensure people don't back out of a commitment.
- Always remember that people act out of self-interest: Give them a reason to show up, even if that reason is peer pressure!

HAVING EFFECTIVE ONE-ON-ONES

A one-on-one is a sit-down conversation, typically around 30–45 minutes, where you get to know someone in your community and figure out together how your values and priorities align. One-on-ones are not necessarily about recruitment, but instead more about building an organizing relationship.

WHEN DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO DO A ONE-ON-ONE?

One-on-ones take time and investment, so be strategic about who you connect with. Remember, even if you already know someone in a personal context, a one-on-one can help you build an organizing relationship. You might want to have a one-on-one with:

POTENTIAL LEADERS

Between your base (your larger group of supporters who show up at public events) and your core (the smaller group who steer the direction of campaigns and meet more often), you likely have new potential leaders. These are often people who want to be more involved, but aren't ready to be in core. One-on-ones are a great way to connect with potential leaders.

POTENTIAL ALLIES

Map out groups that could be invested in the success of your campaigns. It might be useful to build a relationship with them and understand your shared priorities. One-on-ones are great ways to build relationships with new groups and individuals that can strengthen your organizing coalition.

TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE ONE-ON-ONE

In a one-on-one, your goal is to build an organizing relationship with somebody, and figure out together how they can support your cause (and potentially how you can support theirs).

- Talk in person, in a neutral but somewhat private space.
- Ask strong questions: What is their interest in this issue? What do they hope to accomplish? How are they hoping to get involved in your cause? What do they want to learn? What interests or skills could they contribute? How could you support them?
- Listen actively: Aim to speak for around 25% of the time, and listen for the rest. Don't go in with solidified expectations—stay open to their needs and interests.
- If appropriate, speak with them about any next steps they could take.
- Follow up in a personalized way that reflects what you learned in your conversation.