

The Democracy Center - Citizen Action Series

Excerpts from *The Democracy Owners Manual*
(To preview or purchase the book visit www.democracyctr.org)

Effective Organizing: The Key Ingredients

Effective organizing requires a mix of ingredients. Learning how to mix those ingredients together is step one of effective political action.

The Organizer

At the heart of any organizing effort is “the organizer”, the person who takes chief responsibility for putting all the pieces together and keeping them together. The organizer’s work can include any part or all of the following: recruiting people; helping the group define its goals and strategies; keeping people motivated; managing the work tasks; managing conflict; teaching newcomers; and being the spokesperson.

Outreach and Recruitment

In some cases who ought to care about an issue is clear (a neighborhood in search of a stop sign). Most issue campaigns are not so local and recruiting involves first approaching those with a direct stake in the issue – parents, professionals, students, immigrants, etc. Often this is easiest to do by working with established groups where these people already come together.

Meetings And Decision Making

Organizing people also means organizing them to think and to plan together and meetings are where that happens. Effective meetings require a combination of things: clear agendas; a facilitator who keeps things moving and looks for consensus; and management of conflict so that it is neither suppressed nor takes over everything else.

Coordination of the Work to be Done

All of the projects a group decides on need to be divided up into the specific tasks involved and delegated to the people who will carry them out – research, writing, calling, fundraising, etc. All these tasks need to be prioritized and then matched with people able and interested in doing them. The organizer needs to follow-up and make sure all these jobs get done.

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