

INTRODUCTION TO ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZING

Organizing and Leadership Practices that Lead to People-Powered Change

OBJECTIVES:

- Think critically about organizing, leadership, and relational power
- Understand the basics of interdependent leadership in contrast to other leadership models
- Overview the 5 organizing practices of interdependent leadership: Story, Relationships, Structure, Strategy and Action

ORGANIZING IS:

Identifying leaders and coordinating them in leadership teams,
Building community and commitment around that leadership,
Building power from the resources of that community,
Using that power strategically to make concrete change in the world.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

"Leaders are those who take responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty"

In order to launch a new campaign, or strengthen an existing one, your job as an organizer is to identify and recruit others to work with you to build a campaign powerful enough to win change.

But what type of leader should you be, and what are you looking for in others? Sometimes we think the leader is the person everyone goes to, like this "I'm the leader!" approach.

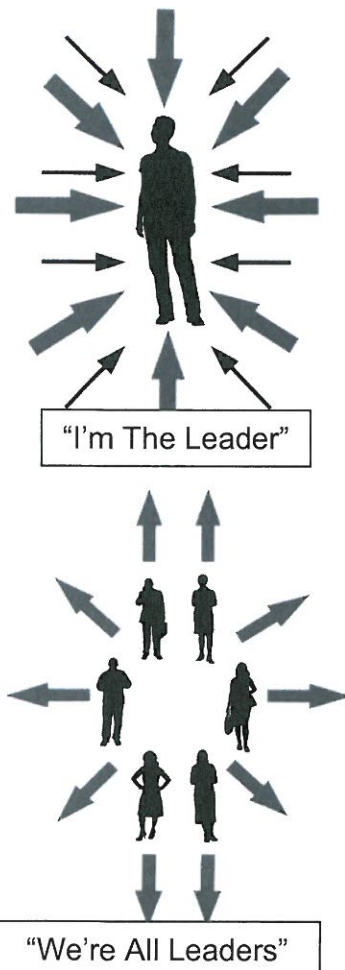
But what does it feel like to be the "leader" in the middle? What does it feel like to be the arrow that can't get through? What happens if the "leader" in the middle drops out?

Sometimes we go to the other extreme and think we don't need a "leader." We can all lead, because "we're all leaders!"

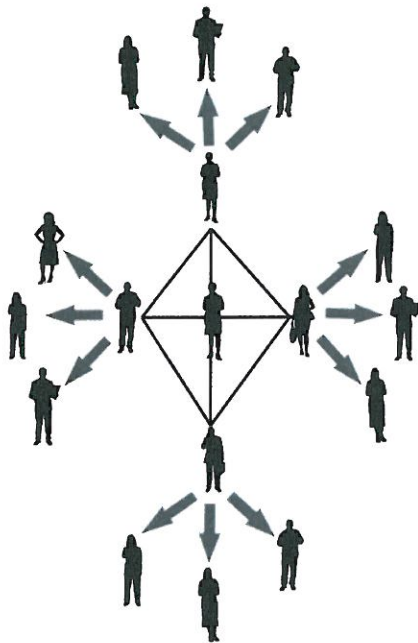
Sometimes this works. But who's responsible for coordinating everyone? And who's responsible for pushing the whole group forward when you can't reach a decision? Who takes ultimate responsibility for the outcome?

Organizers are those who ultimately are held accountable for meeting campaign goals. However, organizers are also

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responsible for coordinating and enabling others to take leadership. This requires delegating responsibility (rather than tasks), holding others accountable for carrying out that responsibility, and supporting them in their work.



Interdependent Leadership

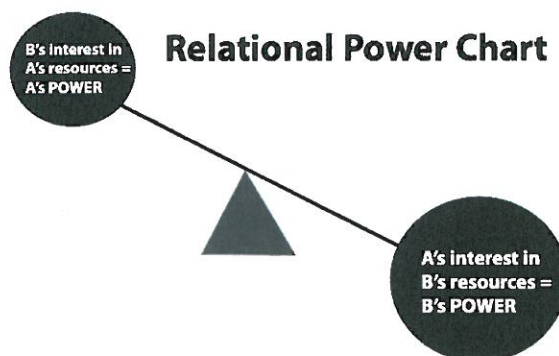
Remember, we don't yet have all the leadership we need in order to win the change we want to see. An organizer's job is to reach out and develop leaders in your community who can help you recruit and coordinate others. They may not be people others usually see as leaders, but they are people committed to change, willing to invite others to join them in the hard work of moving a campaign forward.

These leaders will be the backbone of your local campaign. You must be able to trust them to delegate responsibility to other dedicated, reliable people, and to follow through on commitments. You may be the leader in the middle, or part of a leadership team in the middle, guiding others' efforts and being held accountable for outcomes, but you will be deeply reliant on your relationships with others for success.

WHAT IS POWER?

Organizing is about turning the resources we have into the power we need to win the change we want. So what is power?

Richard Emerson argues that power is not a thing, an attribute, a quality, a characteristic or a trait -- it is a relationship. Power is the influence you have if my interest in your resources is greater than your interest in my resources: you have power over me if I need you more than you need me.



You can uncover the power relations by asking, and getting the answers to, four questions to “help track down the power”:

- What are YOUR interests? What change do you want?
- Who holds the decision-making power or resources you need to meet your interests?
- What are THEIR interests?
- How do THEY need YOU? What resources do you hold which other actors need to meet their own interests?

Our power comes from relationships with people. When we organize to build power we do so with the belief that the same people who need change can organize their own resources into the power they need to create change. Marshall Ganz says, “The unique role of organizing is to enable the people who need or want the change to be the authors of the change, because that addresses the causes of the problem (powerlessness in one form or another), not only the problem.”

So organizing is not only a commitment to identify more leaders, but also a commitment to engage those leaders in a particular type of fight: in nonviolent action to build the power to create the change we need in our lives. Organizing power begins with the choice and commitment made by the first person who wants to make something happen. Without this commitment, there are no resources with which to begin. Commitment is only observable through action. The work of organizers begins with their acceptance of their responsibility to challenge others to join them in action.

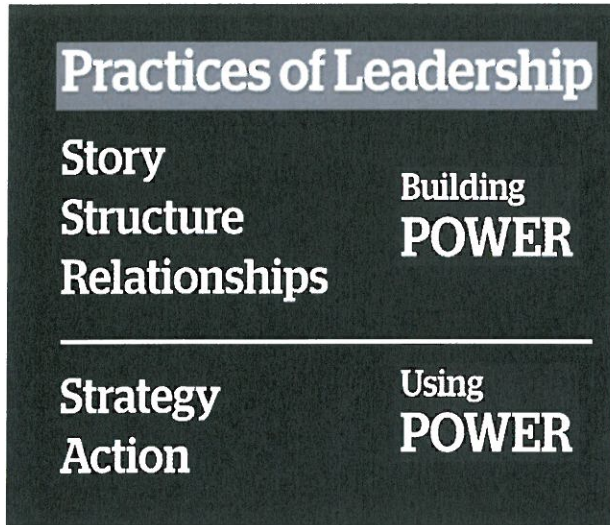
WHAT IS CHANGE?

Change is not inherently good or bad—it’s a break in routine that sends us in a new direction. We all have regular routines in our daily lives. However, sometimes those routines are inherently problematic, like sending our kids to schools that aren’t good enough for them, or working for less pay than we deserve, or putting deadly chemicals in our air and water.

It takes motivation, focused application of resources, and mobilization of others to break these routines and forge a new path forward. The purpose of organizing is to build that focus, the collective resources, and the community to make change.

The challenge of making change is to always measure its concrete impact in our lives. At the end of our campaign have we only changed policy or opinion? Or have we actually improved our schools, do we actually have safer workplaces, do we really have cleaner air, soil and water? And do we have new capacity within our community to win further change?

WHICH ORGANIZING AND LEADERSHIP PRACTICES LEAD TO CHANGE?



Building power requires learning the craft of organizing. The five practices of organizing listed below create change in individuals, in how groups operate, and in how the world looks, feels, and is. As leaders, we can use these key practices to enable others in our organizations to act together with clear purpose, active participation, understanding and initiative, and accomplish shared goals towards creating the measurable change we seek.

1. Creating Shared Story

Organizing is rooted in shared values expressed as public narrative. Public narrative is how we communicate our values through stories, bringing alive the motivation that is a necessary precondition for changing the world. Through public narrative, we tell the story of why we are called to leadership. Public Narrative has three elements:

“Story of Self” illustrates the values that move YOU to act—what calls you to leadership.

“Story of Us” illustrates the values and shared experiences embedded in our community calling us to collective action

“Story of Now” illustrates the urgent challenges to those values and clarifies why action must be taken NOW (not tomorrow, not the next day). The Story of Now also paints a picture of the hopeful vision of what we can achieve together and invites others to join us in taking specific action towards that vision immediately.

2. Creating Shared Relational Commitment

Organizing is based on relationships and creating mutual commitments to work together. It is the process of association—not simply aggregation—that makes a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Through association we can learn to recast our individual interests as common interests, allowing us to envision objectives that we can use our combined resources to achieve. And because it makes us more likely to act to assert those interests, relationship building goes far beyond delivering a message, extracting a contribution, or soliciting a vote. Relationships built as a result of one-to-one and small group meetings create the foundation for local campaign teams, and they are rooted in commitments people make to each other, not simply commitment to an idea, task, or issue.

3. Creating Shared Structure

A team leadership structure leads to effective local organizing that integrates local action with broader regional or national purpose. Volunteer efforts often flounder due to a failure to develop reliable, consistent, and creative local leaders. Structured leadership teams encourage stability, motivation, creativity, and accountability – and use volunteer time, skills, and effort

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effectively. They create the structure within which energized volunteers can accomplish challenging work. Effective teams strive to achieve three criteria of effectiveness: meeting the change objectives of those they serve, learning how to be more effective at meeting outcomes over time, and enhancing the learning and growth of individuals on the team. Team members work to put in place five conditions that will lead to effectiveness: real team (bounded, stable and interdependent), engaging direction, enabling roles, clear ground rules, and a diverse team with the skills and talents needed to do the work.

4. Creating Shared Strategy

Although based on broad values, effective organizing campaigns learn to focus on a clear strategic objective, a way to turn those values into action and to unleash creative deliberation (for example elect a President; desegregate buses in Montgomery, Alabama; getto 100% clean electricity). Statewide campaigns locate responsibility for statewide strategy at the top (or at the center), but are able to “chunk out” strategic objectives in time (deadlines) and space (local areas) as a campaign, allowing significant local responsibility for figuring out how to achieve those objectives. Responsibility for strategizing local objectives empowers, motivates and invests local teams. This dual structure allows the movement as a whole to be relentlessly well oriented and fosters the personal motivation of volunteers to be fully engaged.

5. Creating Shared Measurable Action

Organizing outcomes must be clear, measurable, and specific if progress is to be evaluated, accountability practiced, and strategy adapted based on experience. Such measures include: volunteers recruited, money raised, people at a meeting, voters contacted, pledge cards signed, laws passed, etc. Although electoral campaigns enjoy the advantage of very clear outcome measures, any effective organizing drive must come up with the equivalent. Regular reporting of progress to goal creates opportunity for feedback, learning, and adaptation. Training is provided for all skills (holding house meetings, phone banking, canvassing, etc) to carry out the program. New media may help enable reporting, feedback, and coordination. Transparency exists as to how individuals, groups, and the campaign as a whole are doing on progress to goal.

Have you ever been part of an organization or “disorganization” described by the words on the left? The difference between that and the organization described on the right is not any particular issue, any particular demographic or any particular geography. It’s about the practice of leadership from the inside out. This training is structured around teaching these practices, and supporting you in practicing them.

DISORGANIZATION	INTERDEPENDENT LEADERSHIP CREATES	ORGANIZATION
Drift	Shared Story	Purpose
Passive	Shared Relational Commitment	Participation
Confused	Shared Structure	Understanding
Reactive	Shared Strategy	Initiative
Inaction	Shared Measurable Action	Change

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