



Strategies for Effective Engagement
A Guide for Youth Environmental Activists

Sarah A. Voska

University of Wisconsin- Parkside

Author's Note

For Correspondence, direct emails to svoska21@gmail.com.



Abstract

This guidebook will address the topic of youth engagement strategies for environmental activists. Through collaboration across regions, sectors and industries, we can accomplish more to protect our planet. This project encompasses various aspects of activism: focusing primarily on organization management and communication. The guidebook will be shared with current or aspiring activists, to provide them with a framework from which to launch strategic campaigns and best utilize limited resources through the development of smart goals and project management guidelines.

This paper aspires to delineate what makes a campaign successful, and what strategies are most effective to spur engagement. It includes observational data, and research from the fields of sustainability psychology, marketing, strategic management, and education. The guide was designed to empower youth activists to promote sustainability initiatives in their communities using the tactics optimized by businesses and management professionals.

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Strategies for Effective Engagement

A Guide for Youth Environmental Activists

“It’s finally done, with the sound of the hammer hitting the conference negotiation table from the excited COP21 president. It’s a victory not only for participating nations, but all human beings of present and future generations. Everyone is cheering and hugging, excited tears are running down every negotiators’ face. (Yijin, 2017)

This is the image that my friend Guo Yijin painted as he recalled history being made. On December 12th, 2015, the Paris Agreement draft document was accepted. The Paris Agreement had passed in the United Nations Climate Change Convention. Guo studies environmental science in Liverpool. He is from the Yunnan Province of China and was my pen pal for a year-. He attended the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21) as a member of the China Youth Climate Action Network, and sent me updates as I eagerly watched from afar.

The signing of the Paris Agreement was a pivotal moment in international cooperation. 195 countries agreed to a legally binding commitment to reduce emissions, mobilize financing for climate change adaptation, and keep global average temperature rise to well below two degrees Celsius. The deal, which was more than ten years in the making, was the next step after the Kyoto Protocol failed to keep countries committed to a climate change accord. It was made possible thanks to strong pushes from civil society, corporations, and government leaders to act in concert to address the challenges of climate change. The Paris Agreement is the result of years of collaboration, policy re-working, integrating of those policies into nationally determined contributions - action plans and commitments that each country wrote to fulfill the goals of the Paris Agreement.

This Conference of the Parties (COP) was the first to allow public access to the negotiation space, and increased participation from stakeholders. Over the course of the two week conference, which required a two day extension), the first ever universal, legally binding agreement on climate change was achieved. It was also the first global climate deal to recognize the importance and enact the integration of stakeholder participation into the language of the Agreement. The policy makers knew that climate change is not an issue that any one institution, country or individual can solve alone. To address the challenge of climate change requires collaboration, cooperation, and the motivation to build a renewed society, one that no longer requires the burning of fossil fuels or emission of greenhouse gasses to thrive.

As activists, citizens, students, professionals, and human beings, we are called to participate actively in society to create a better world for the next generation. We must all work together to share strategies and successes, data and determination as we move towards a sustainable future.



COP21 President, Segolene Royal, celebrates reaching agreement on Dec. 12, 2015 at COP21 in Paris, alongside Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon; French President, Francois Hollande and members of the UNFCCC Secretariat

Often times, non-profit groups and businesses have different management styles, organizational behavior, and record keeping requirements. But when it comes down to it, the only real difference between these two types of organizations is their bottom line. In businesses, as Mr. Goldratt reminded us throughout the pages of his book, “The Goal”, the goal is profitability (The Goal, 1984). The fundamental goal of a non-profit is to provide a social good. By their charter, a non-profit, or even a not-for-profit cannot operate with the goal of profitability. Even so, non-profit organizations can learn from the strategies used in other organizations, such as government, businesses and for-profit entities, to improve their information management, marketing, fundraising, and hiring of staff or volunteers.

With this in mind, the content below provides replicable strategies for youth globally to be activists, influencers, change-makers and social entrepreneurs in their own communities. These strategies were gathered from operations executives, psychology researchers, policy makers, community leaders, and most importantly, the youth who are on the ground, united for climate action. What follows also contains tips on organization, communication, influencing others, and setting goals.

Getting Started

As an individual, each person has the power to make a difference and create a brighter, greener future for themselves and their community. This effort requires focus, motivation and a strong support system. This task of greening a community can be tackled by an individual, or by a group/organization. In order to further their environmental goals, realizing there are others around them that have a similar desire to get involved, many people form clubs, collectives or non-profit entities (hereby referred to as NGOs). When getting started, one must ask what is it

they want to accomplish. What problem do they look to solve? Who are they targeting? In the most basic iteration: What is the point?

Let's talk about mission statements: A mission statement defines the goals of an organization. It states the purpose of the organization's existence. For decades, it has been understood to be the "first step in the strategic management process" (Cochran, David, & Gibson, 2008). The authors went on to share that, "a mission statement can be defined as an enduring document of purpose that distinguishes one [organization] from other firms of its type" (Pearce, 1982). The "father of strategic management", Peter Drucker defines it as "what our business is and what it should be" (Management: Tasks, Responsibilities and Practices, 1982, p. 75). In the case of a non-profit, developing a mission statement is absolutely critical, as forms the definition of whether or not the organization is successful. While businesses are graded in the marketplace on their profitability, a non-profit is measured by a different standard. So what tools are used to determine success of a non-profit?

Try It! A good tactic to developing a mission statement is to "pitch" your organization to someone. How do you describe the organization? What are its short-term and long-term goals? What does it do? Why does it exist? Next, take the answers and see if they can be melded into one to two sentences that summarize the essence of the organization.

For an individual or for a new project, ask yourself who you want to help, and what causes you care about (See Passion Assessment, p.42).

What would your closest friends say that you are passionate about? What would you like to look back and say that you have accomplished?

Recent work from both Pearce and David on the topic states that a mission statement must address the customer base, products or services provided, markets, concern for growth and profitability, and philosophy. Its essence should speak to relations with the company's employees, customers, and the general public. (2008, p. 30).

In March of 2017, Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago undertook the task of rebranding the zoo according to their mission statement. A vision statement was written and strategic plan developed to implement that vision, which was then used in everyday operations. Betsy Maher, Director of Volunteer Services for the zoo, noticed an internal morale boost that made people "excited to be a part of the zoo after rebranding" (Maher, 2017).

A good mission statement is focused, but allows for growth. It looks at the big picture, and serves as a guide for decision making in the years to come (Millard, 2010). It should also be realistic and succinct. Organizations without a streamlined mission statement may experience expensive offshoots that distract from the goals of the organization and prevent them from attaining the desired impact.

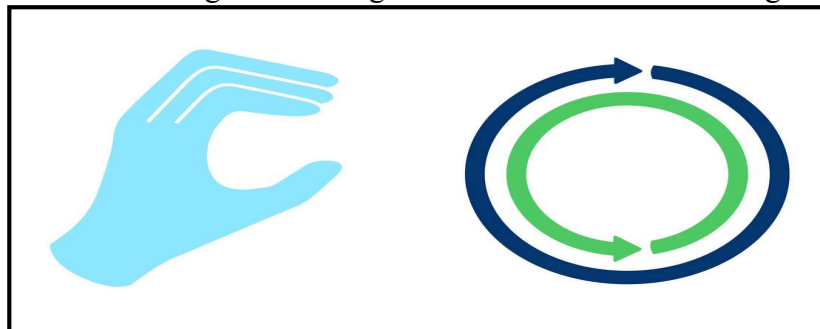
Once a mission statement is developed, the natural next step would be to address means of attaining that mission. Probably the key to attainment is determining the target audience of the project. Perhaps it is elementary school students - for an education project, or the town council - for a land rights project. Think like a marketing firm, and identify key interest groups who could be a resource or a means of obtaining the goal. Who would "buy in" to this concept? Who needs to be convinced of this project's value for the project to be achieved? If you are working to launch a campaign on a specific environmental issue, ask yourself if the campaign aligns with your mission statement. Develop a set of specific goals that you would like to see as the outcome of your campaign.

Next, identify a target stakeholders. Sometimes, these will be the general public, but most of the time, to implement the change you wish to see, you need a Decision Maker. A decision maker is an individual or group of individuals who has the power to deliver your goal (Wilson, Cox, & Arnett, 1999, p. 25). Your primary target stakeholder - if it is a decision maker - should be an individual or group of individuals. It should not be an institution. Thus, if you need the city council to vote on a proposed amendment, your target stakeholder should be the council members who are most likely to side with the campaign, in the quantity you need to be able to secure the necessary votes.

Finally, create a team of friends, community members, volunteers or staff, who are committed and passionate about the goal. These people will make up the core team of the organization or campaign. They are essential to sustaining progress toward the implementation of environmental solutions.

The Climate Sign

Part of making a movement grow is having a symbol to rally around. The Climate Sign is more than a logo, it is a statement of purpose, which can be closely linked to the mission of a company or environmental organization. As groups and individuals adopt the symbol, it shows solidarity towards the environmental movement and is a way to link up with others around the world doing the same work. The Climate Sign was developed to mimic the Peace Sign. The Peace Sign was created as part of the nuclear disarmament movement in the 1950s, and has since grown into one of the most recognizable images worldwide. The Climate Sign works in a similar



fashion with both a hand sign and a symbol that unites people for climate action. When we use the Climate Sign, we recognize climate change as an opportunity for global collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Climate groups, world leaders, and individuals use the sign to show they stand for action on climate change and are ready to address this shared challenge.

The Climate Sign can be used to connect environmentalists, scientists, schoolchildren, and other community members who care about reversing anthropogenic climate change. The Climate Sign can be paired with scientific data, educational material, incorporated into staff training at museums and zoos, as well as be utilized by business owners, to indicate an on-going commitment to sustainability. In organizations, it can be used to empower volunteers and staff to incorporate the importance of climate activism into interaction with others about the work. The image can be used on signage, literature, or shared by marketing or educational staff to demonstrate an institution's ongoing support for climate change action, and share the work that they are doing currently. The hand sign can be used in pictures, group gatherings, and video. During gatherings- whether a town hall with politicians, a conference or a march - the Climate

Think about it! If you read or watched the Hunger Games series, think the symbolism of raising the three-fingered salute. The salute is used in District 12 to show respect, admiration, and love. Each time it is raised during the games, it shows resistance growing against The Capital, and leads to the beginning of the uprising. The peoples' movement had reached critical mass when it was first used in District 11 to support Katniss, a remarkable act that began to unite the districts together for a common cause. After reading the books, District 12's symbol was adopted by Thai activists as a means to show solidarity against the military government coup.

What symbols do you recognize in your culture that are used to signify solidarity?

Sign can show the power of the movement by creating a visual representation of the people who care. On social media as well, #ClimateSign can be used to create community and unify activists working in different environments, languages and geographic conditions. During COP21, the Climate Sign was displayed in lights on the side of the Eiffel Tower, and at COP23, youth used the Climate Sign to ask negotiators to go “further, faster, together” by uniting for climate action.

Influencing Others: Earning a Reputation and Persuading People

Giving people an opportunity to talk about themselves provokes pleasurable feelings in them, and whomever gives them that opportunity begins to become associated with those feelings. Harvard University Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience lab found that talking about yourself is linked to the release of dopamine. Self-disclosure stimulated the same part of the brain as “rewards” such as good food, drugs or laughter. Their findings show an addictive nature in talking about the self, and especially talking about the self to someone else (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012).

Take a note from the Grandmothers, who tried to feed and dote on anyone who comes near them. In the case of my Sicilian great grandmother, she would bake loaves of bread to show her love. The plumber is coming to work on the sink? Better bake a loaf of bread! It wasn't just the soft bread with sweet butter on top that made her so loved. After spending hours mixing, kneading, and baking the bread, “Nana” would sit at the kitchen table and show genuine interest in her guest. She wanted to hear what they were doing, learn about their passions, and support them in any accomplishments. She graciously gave her time to learn about others, was positive and encouraging, and would ask about it next time she saw them. Nana knew that it takes putting effort and interest into other people for them to put effort and interest into you.

One way to apply this strategy in an organizational setting is to make it a practice of spending time with members of the organization's target audience - including volunteers/staff and the people whom the organization is trying to address in their mission - and listen for their interests, values, and goals.

The Lincoln Park Zoo takes an interesting approach to capture the interest of children at one of their educational carts. The sign on the cart read in big letters: "Feces Save Species". During my visit, I witnessed a volunteer educator asked the kids gathered around, "Do you know what these are?" He pointed to the plastic replicas of animal droppings as they shouted out "scat" "poop" "droppings" "dung", and they giggled. He proceeded to quickly question the kids on which animal matched up with each sample. Having successfully hooked his audience, and having given them a chance to talk about their opinions, the volunteer was able to talk about the Zoo's Animal Welfare Team's use of dung to measure the stress levels and hormones in their animals. This was a non-invasive means of checking up on the animals, keeping both keepers and animals safe. By speaking in the frame of the children's interests, the volunteer educator was able to share the zoo's message with them, as well as their parents and chaperones.

Meeting the right people at conferences, summits, or rallies, and gaining their support is made easier by the use of this strategy. At a conference for the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, I found that the best way to approach zoo representatives to advance my organization's goals was to ask questions about their educational objectives, their conservation goals, and learn what their zoo stood for. When I spoke to educators about their goals, I was able to offer a more personalized presentation of our educational programs and our goals in return. Because I knew what their objectives were, I was able to present a mutual goal, one that fit their institution, and framed the proposal as easing their burden, instead of adding to their workload

through additional programming. I then followed up with a few of the people I met and sat down for a one-on-one conversation where I talked about their specific role, their successful programs, difficulties they encountered and their vision for the future. At the end, after really just letting them talk about themselves and their work, they asked me what I did. I found that after talking with them about their work, my own work resonated more with them. I framed the work of Care About Climate to match what they had expressed to me. At which point they were thinking about what they could do to move forward with the work of climate change education. They were now thinking positively about institutional growth and what their programs needed to do to succeed. I found that this strategy resulted in longer meetings with decision makers and influencers. I believe that this was because, in addition to other factors, people love talking about themselves.

A group of psychologists at the University of Texas-Austin have worked to develop a means of correlating the actions and perceptions of two people with the likelihood that one of them would “self-disclose”. They found that being a good listener, encouraging others and being sympathetic are strongly correlated with people opening up to them (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983, p. 1235). In another study, researchers explored whether influence can come from establishing shared traits or commonalities. They used a group of MBA students and asked them to reach a deal in a simulation. Half of the students were told that “time is money” and to get straight to the negotiations. The remaining half were told to share a bit about themselves first and, once they found something they had in common, to start negotiating. In the same amount of time, 55% of the first group of students managed to reach a deal. Meanwhile, 90% of students in the second group reached a deal, and their deals tended to be more mutually beneficial (Cialdini, 1984). This strategy is commonly used in high stakes sales in businesses, who want to woo their client. Salesmen will take detailed notes about the names of clients’ children or hobbies so that

they can remember to ask about them, for example. Business dinners, receptions on the first night of a conference, and galas are standard practice because they offer a chance to connect on a personal level with colleagues, potential clients, and create new networks.

Another approach to get people to be more receptive to your message and to facilitate a degree of self-disclosure is by showing genuine interest in them. This is useful since a major interest that most people have is themselves. As previously mentioned, people tend to engage more in conversations that are related to shared interest and in which other participants use active listening. Combining the two - engaging people in a conversation about themselves while actively listening - is a surefire way to get someone to join the conversation, or stay in it.

Dale Carnegie reminds us that people's names are the sweetest sound to their ears. If you really want to remind people of their worth, and make them feel appreciated, address them by name as often as you can (Carnegie, 1936). This is confirmed by evidence from PET scans of people's brains as their names, and unrelated names were spoken to them, with the researchers observing the reactions. In each test subject, the sound of their own name created stronger neural reactions, and in more areas of the brain. The experiment was repeated with sedated test subjects, who selectively responded to hearing their own name (Carmondy, Moreno, Mars, & all, 2006).

Try It! Meet up with a colleague, classmate, or fellow volunteer to talk to them about *their* work. Ask them about their interests, passions, successes, and back story. Try and keep the conversation positive, and about them. Write down their favorite things, their values, and their sensitivities. What can you take from this conversation the next time you see them? Keep an eye out for how their treatment of you changes from this easy conversation.

Encouraging Others

Few things are more inspiring and motivating than enthusiasm and positive energy. As Niki Harre, psychologist at the University of Auckland shares in her book, *Psychology for a Better World*, positivity can boost creativity, cooperation and flexibility. (Harré, 2011) In a study conducted on University of Michigan students, researchers found that people who were in a good mood were more likely to solve a threat (instead of discount the threat or mope), were better decision makers (using all available data) and better negotiators. They found that being in a positive mood was correlated to broadening mindsets and improved adaptability (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

Positive thinking can be spread to others through tactics as simple as smiling. Even a forced smile has been found to trigger a release of endorphins, dopamine and serotonin the hormones associated with happiness. These neurotransmitters have anti-depressant properties and even lower blood pressure. Smiles are contagious, with an unconscious automatic response occurring in the cingulate cortex when others smile at you. (O'Doherty, et al., 2003). That is, if someone flashes a smile, it requires a conscious effort to frown in return.

Another tactic is to “feed forward”, which is practiced by coaches and sports professionals, as well as psychologists. Basically, we know that just hearing about an activity stimulates the brain neurons to go through the steps of doing the action. That’s why storytelling can be such a powerful, vivid experience. Because of this, you can essentially “teach” someone the mental steps to accomplishing something. “It is the opposite of feedback in that you use observation of the future to inform the present”, says Dr. Peter Dowrick, the Behavioral scientist at the University of Auckland who studied this phenomenon. He found that memories and fantasies are stored in the same part of the brain. When they first tried having study participants

watch video of others accomplishing a task, they found that the participants often lost interest in the actors on the screen. But when the subject themselves were used as the main character, the research participants were much more attentive.

This strategy was used with a child with ADHD who couldn't sit still in class. His doctors helped produce a video of him behaving in class, and would show it to him repeatedly. After watching it, he was noticeably better behaved. After a week of using the video, they no longer needed to show it to him regularly. In essence the child showed himself how to behave properly (Harré, 2011).

Working with Decision Makers

Investigate the values or interests of your target audience. What are the values that influence their ethics and decision making? How do these values or interests relate to the goal of your campaign? I spent a year trying to encourage my co-workers and employers to stop using single-use plastic cups and straws, reminding them how important it was for the environment that we reduce consumption and waste production. After quite some time of pushing for this change, to no avail, a story came on the news showing how restaurants stopped handing out straws with every drink, and they saved money by doing it. As businessmen, my employers saw the story and immediately wanted to stop using single-use plastic straws. All of a sudden, he was sharing the same arguments that I had been making: "you really don't *need* a straw to drink", "it's such a waste". By appealing to the interests of restaurateurs, the advertiser was able to immediately catch their attention and show them an action that they were then encouraged to take themselves.

Influencing decision-makers, whether it is your boss, a political figure, or powerful business men & women, requires some careful preparation and research. It is crucial that you are

prepared for your meetings with decision makers. The first step is to make sure to identify the people who are directly responsible for enacting the policies or funding the projects you want to implement; those that are capable of changing policies and investing in your solutions. Whether public or private sector, your work needs to be done in collaboration with those with the power and money and influence to enact these changes you are advocating for. Focus your efforts on the key individuals that you have identified, gain their trust, and, when possible, use positive messaging to work in collaboration with them. To do this, you must present solutions that are politically and economically viable. There must also be grassroots and coalition support. This includes the identification of influencers that they listen to, as well as who they are obligated to listen to in order to maintain a position of influence in the community. What do the people who they listen to believe? What are their values? The consequences of any inaction must also be addressed.

Illinois District 51 State Representative, Nick Sauer, narrowed the decision maker's political challenge down to four simple questions:

- 1) Who is opposed?
- 2) Who is in favor?
- 3) What is the benefit to my district*?
- 4) What happens if I don't act on this issue?

*district can be substituted for whatever that person has influence over

With decision-makers, the basic tenants of influencing others must be top of mind, in that you have to be friendly, encouraging and positive. Political figures are often chewed up and spit out in public arenas, whether it is at a Town Hall discussion, or on Twitter.

Representative Sauer assures his constituents that getting lambasted in a public arena is not an effective means of gaining influence, however memorable. While social media is surely a way to get in contact with decision-makers, especially those who represent you, the best way is to

show up to meetings and make time for one-on-one conversation. Put yourself in a situation where you can be genuine, and the dialogue can flow organically. In a phone or in-person conversation, the decision maker is given clues from the discourse, non-verbal cues, and a space for a back-and-forth dialogue when trying to respond. Be thankful and appreciative that they are taking the time to listen to you. Be upfront about your vested interests, and start on a positive note.

Having done your research, you know a bit about this person's interests, habits, past decisions, and motivations. This should allow a relationship with the decision maker to develop. Their values can be directly tied to relevant parts of the organization or campaign. And when addressing campaign, have a clear goal in mind. What can this person do to support the campaign? Answer the four questions listed above, giving the decision maker all the information they need to make a decision. Rep. Sauer said that the activist has to do their homework, they can't expect a busy representative to be researching all of these issues. It is much easier for a decision maker to make a choice if these questions are answered. In some cases, a phone call or meeting is not possible, and a personal letter is the best option to get in contact with the decision maker. While a form letter shows minimal commitment, a letter specifically to the target- typed or handwritten- shows passion and dedication to a cause, and adds a personal voice and story to the issue. Again, start on a positive, state the purpose of the communication, connect the issue to the decision-maker's values, and answer the four above questions to lead them towards action and a solution. Finally, end with an expression of genuine gratitude. Just thinking of one positive thing that is admirable about another person will help to break down barriers and overcome ideological differences.

Power Mapping

One way to gain influence over a decision maker is to determine how the people around them would react to such a proposal as the one you hope they will adopt. The process of Power Mapping is believed to have been developed for the Bonner Civic and Community Engagement Training Curriculum and was first documented in research by Theresa Hagan in the *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* (Hagan & Smail, 1997). When you have identified your target decision maker, begin to look at institutions, organizations and individuals with whom he or she associates. This includes past coworkers, family members, business partners and other organizational ties.

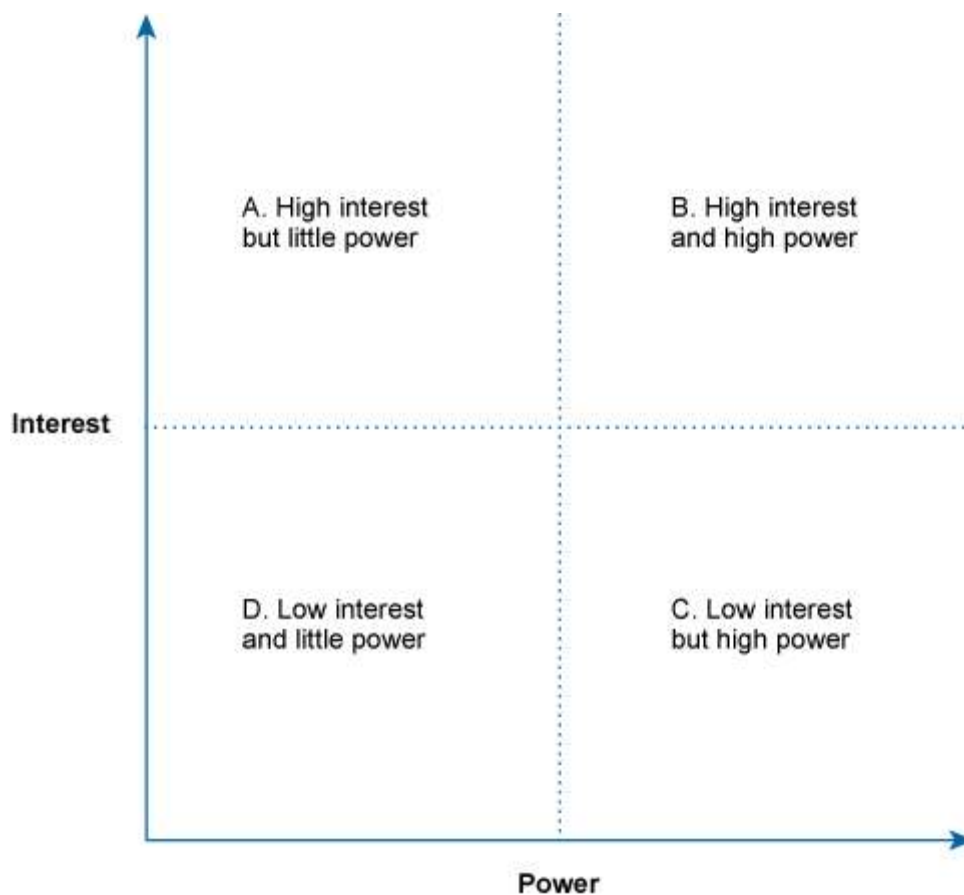


Figure 2- Power Map. Using this diagram, plot where each influential person or entity lies in relation to the center, where your Target or Decision-Maker sits.

On a power map, there are four sectors on a graph. In the center lies the decision maker; the horizontal axis represents the level of influence one holds over the decision maker. The vertical axis represents whether or not they support your initiative. Thus, in the upper right hand corner would be those who are most able to influence your Decision Maker and who are also most likely to be in favor of your proposal. These are the people who your campaign should aim to include and coax into your coalitions.

Forty years ago, the Chicago suburbs did not have recycling services. A non-profit organization called Citizens for Conservation bought some dumpsters and started collecting the recyclable waste that their members created. Then, they began soliciting recyclables from other community members. Soon, they were doing recycling workshops and collecting large quantities of content to be brought to centers. The work was funded by the money obtained from the recycling centers and volunteer efforts. Within five years, the municipal government in the suburb of Barrington took over recycling collection and it is now commonplace - in fact it's expected that residents separate recycling from landfill material. Barrington was the first community in the metropolitan area to offer recycling services. Citizens for Conservation facilitated the introduction of recycling services in the community and made the project scalable so that they could accommodate more and more over time. They lobbied officials to support their efforts and worked closely with the community to get grassroots support. Thanks to their efforts, the village was able to implement the project on an even greater scale with little to no resistance from the community. They provided the education and fronted much of the economic and political risk, so it would be easy for the village. They saw a problem, created a solution, took initiative to implement the solution, and worked with decision makers. When the village took over the project, they eased the transition and began work on their next project: wetland

restoration. Currently, CFC still maintains close ties to community leaders so that they can continue to influence policy for the best interests of the community and the restoration project.

UN Climate Talks

The first organization of youth delegates at UNFCCC conferences began in Montreal in 2005, at COP11 (International Youth Climate Movement, 2016). There, youth gathered and realized that when coming together, their voices could be much more powerful. In just four years, they became a constituency body. How did the youth do all this? By working in collaboration with each other, we managed to receive recognition by the UNFCCC in 2009 (COP15-Copenhagen) as a constituency group. In 2016 (COP22-Marrakech), Youth lobbied for the inclusion of minors (under 18 years of age) to be included in the subsequent years' proceedings. In 2017 (COP23-Fiji), Youth delivered a number of interventions to the negotiating bodies, and secured a commitment to prioritize youth and schoolchildren in capacity-building initiatives.

During COP22 and COP23, I witnessed youth from around the world contribute to international policy making as parties wrote the Paris Agreement Rulebook for

Try It! Fill out a Power Map for this hypothetical situation:

A solar power company has approached the mayor and town council for a permit to build a solar farm on what was agricultural land. You support the initiative, but the Mayor has not yet made up their mind. You need to convince the council to award the permit.

- Who in your community will have the greatest influence on the mayor?
- Who in your community will be in favor of this proposal?
- Who in your community will be against this proposal?

Map it out using the chart above!

implementation. Over the past few years, youth have had increased presence at the conference,

and in general in international policy-making. Even so, despite our victories, youth have been limited by funding shortcomings. Youth represent nearly half of the world population (UN Population, 2017) and must be included in decision making processes. Especially when it comes to climate change, Youth make up the generation that will be faced with the greatest consequences in the form of extreme weather conditions, drought and famine, respiratory ailments, refugee/migrant crises, and global warfare over resource availability.

Currently, youth participation is limited by funding, access to badges to UN

COP22 Attendance

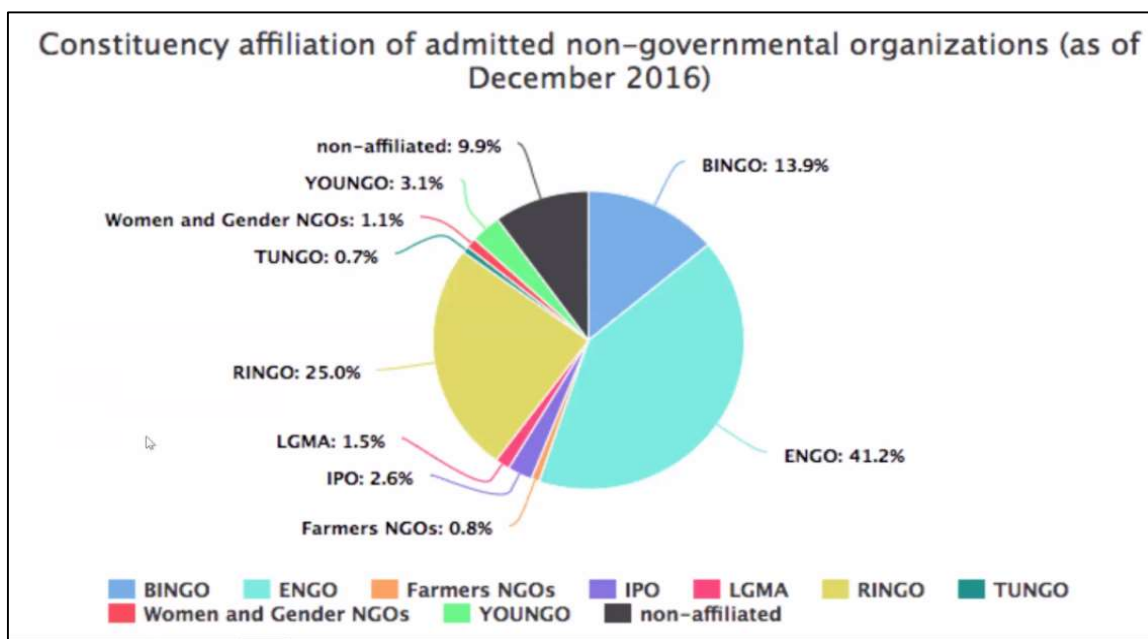


Figure 1 Youth participation in UNFCCC processes by constituency. YOUNGO, or youth non-governmental organizations, represents only 3.1% of attendees. Source: UNFCCC

conferences, and a lack of diversity and mentorship in decision making bodies that would foster youth participation. At COP22 in Marrakesh, Youth represented just over 3% of all NGO attendees, or 145 people. UNFCCC records have tracked youth participation at COPs since the first COP in Berlin in 1995. While fluctuation in the numbers have occurred because of the number of badges released, public interest in attending, and the location of the

conference, Youth presence at COPs has been trending upwards, with high participation in critical years - 355 youth showed up in force to build the new Youth NGO constituency (UNFCCC, 2017). Since its creation, YOUNGO have created a constituency group that is inclusive, democratic, responsive to criticism, and active in the creation of policy. One of YOUNGO's unique talents is organizing direct actions to visually call attention to specific policies or negotiator oversight, pushing negotiators towards stronger commitments to protect the environment. This work was enough in 2015 to gain the inclusion of "future generations" as a group victimized by climate change (UNFCCC, 2015).

Talanoa Mada

In the Pacific Islands, there is a concept called *Talanoa*, which is an inclusive, participative, and transparent dialogue. Whether or not it was called as such, hosting *Talanoa* sessions has proved effective in many areas where debate on a particular issue has a tendency to end with aloofness-or negative reactions from involved parties. *Talanoa* is used to tell stories in order to connect personally with the others involved, freely share ideas, feelings and opinions, and converse relationally about difficult problems. During COP23, Fiji Prime Minister and COP23 President, Frank Bainimarama and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa held an Open Dialogue between party actors and constituency groups. Mr. Bainimarama declared that this would be a Talanoa Dialogue, where all parties could share openly on a basis of trust and empathy. This was the first time for many constituency groups to have a seat at the table with equal footing and an equal voice in the conversation. Statements made by constituencies were given freely, not limited or timed as they typically are.

The dialogue was called to address three questions: Where Are We? Where do we need to be? How do we get there? These three questions were to be answered through a conversation

between the stakeholders and the 196 nations that are part of the Paris Agreement. The purpose of this dialogue is to create solutions, to drive innovation, and propose realistic means through which we limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C. As youth, we can be underrepresented, or have our opinions discarded. But that does not have to be the norm. By participating in public debate and discussions about our future, and by asking for equal standing among stakeholder groups, we will not only earn a seat at the table, but gain the trust and respect of the decision makers in our community. In fact, through participation, youth can even gain a decision-making position. Nisreen Abdelrahman Elsaïm of Sudan is only 22 years old, but represented her country at COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco and at COP23 in Bonn, Germany, as the focal point on Capacity Building, Gender and Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). She was the voice of the Sudanese government in negotiations about how to implement curriculums about climate change in schools, increasing women's role in decision making, and empowering indigenous communities to share their knowledge about ecological systems. “[We believe] that responsible and professional dialogue with *all* actors and decision makers for a united Africa is the only way to overcome the obstacles of attaining a sustainable, just development that preserves rights, equality and dignity”, said Nisreen, who played a critical role in Sudan adopting the Paris Agreement in 2016 after her policy paper on climate change adaptation within the Paris Agreement won second place in a competition (Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, 2017). Countries are increasingly using youth volunteers to fill vacancies in their delegations because of limited funding in developing countries to send government officials to attend the proceedings. They have chosen to trust youth leaders as their negotiators on the world stage during the UNFCCC meetings as a way to strengthen their country's voice.

The Maipo Adaptacion: Plan de Acción (MAPA) project in the Maipo watershed in central Chile was conducted by researchers from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC) who wanted to know how stakeholders affected by water vulnerability believed that climate change adaptation should be implemented in the Maipo River valley. Since 2012, UC investigators have facilitated a collaborative dialogue between the public and private sector, residents and industry, to determine the issues that would face each stakeholder, and how they could work to preventatively compensate for the ecological, social and economic risks associated with mismanagement of water resources in the valley. Not only did this format achieve its goal of developing an action plan on adaptation, it also brought together diverse groups- including mining companies, farmers, various water utilities, the environmental and agricultural ministries, research institutions, and super-national organizations like the United Nations. One of the researchers, Eduardo Bustos, mentioned that there was a sense of “neutrality” among the participants, that no one sector was being given more of a voice than the others. During these sessions, the ministries and researchers provided technical information that laid out some of the facts of how climate change would impact the watershed. By relying on technical knowledge and letting the stakeholders draw their conclusions based on data, and then inviting stakeholders to come up with solutions, stakeholders were much more receptive to collaboration and cooperation.

The project gave all sectors a chance to be heard, and encouraged them to work together and look inward for solutions. While the researchers had not included in their proposal for the MAPA project a means through which the plan would be enacted upon completion of the project, the stakeholders have taken it upon themselves to act towards the goals decided collaboratively. Stakeholders are now working with local government officials and writing policies to adapt to

the changing climate, above and beyond the original call. This example shows the power of *Talanoa*-style communication.

In a separate instance, a group of university students volunteering for a disaster relief effort held daily *Talanoa* sessions in order to determine their course of action for the day. During those sessions, the students decided how the team of fifty students would be of best use to the community that had been ravaged weeks prior by alluvial rains and mudslides in the Atacama Desert (Pranao, 2017). Using these sessions, they managed to organize without a hierarchy or leadership structure, but each participant took an active role in assembling the plan. This collaborative style worked well because everyone in the group was equally committed to seeing the plan through to completion. In Chile, this structure is called *autogestion*, or self-management. It is made possible through inclusive, transparent meetings, where nothing is begun until everyone's opinions are heard and consensus is reached. It was frustrating to see how long it took to hear everyone's voices. But as I watched them work throughout the day, I saw how well organized the entire team was, and better understood the power of *autogestion* and *Talanoa* as a means to spur people to action.

A New Zealand researcher studied the effects of using *Talanoa* in collecting research, and found similar results in that the participants were much more likely to provide quality data, as well as react to the outputs of the research, as was the case in the Maipo River Valley.

The reciprocity embedded in Talanoa will raise the expectations that researchers and participants have of each other, promoting mutual accountability, which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of the research. The effect of reciprocity is such that when people give koloa (in this case, time and knowledge) they will expect it to be respected

and honored, and to be used well. Developments will be followed with interest. (Vaioleti, 2006)

Using *Talanoa* style communication inspires participation, demonstrates to participants their value, and improves retention and the quality of research or action gained from participants. By fostering an environment on the basis of trust, and including involved parties in the decision making, they are more interest in working together for the long term.

Reaching Agreement

Once key influencers on the campaign power map have been identified, how does one get them on board with the campaign's goals and mission? To start with them on your side, appeal to their interests. Lead the person along further by continuing to ask questions and make decisions that they agree with, get them to say YES immediately. By establishing the common ground first, you often find that the other person's opinions are not so different from your own. Even so, you already have much in common as a basis for the conversation. When we begin the conversation on a groundwork of a similar mindset, we are more likely to agree down the

Try It! Practice finding commonalities with others and reaching agreement with your team using this game taken from Improv theater trainings. To play, the first player sets the setting and plot, and then every subsequent line has to begin with the phrase "Yes, and".

See the example:

Character #1: "What a hot and miserable day to be a ranch hand!" (*Following the "Yes, and" method, the second character will accept the premise and add to the situation.*)

Character #2: "Yep and the boss said we don't get no water until this fence is mended."

Character #1: "Yes and ain't he the meanest cuss we've ever worked for?"

Character #2: "Yep and it's made me think about leaving behind this cowboy life and headin' off for San Francisco." (Bradford, 2017)

Practice conversing with people who don't prescribe to your worldview or understanding of climate science using this tactic.

road. When trying to sway decision makers or community members to your way of thinking, starting on the premise of what you agree on is much more effective than pointing out differences of opinions. As social creatures, humans desire to connect & seek out similarities to each other (diversity, 2004). According to the Harvard Business Review, by showing our similarities, we are more likely to be trusted (Kramer, 2009). By pointing out the areas where we are similar, it shows that we are connected through common opinions which gives the speaker reputability.

Organizational Management

When Matthew Voska was twelve years old, he tried building a tree house. He used 10 nails to attach each piece of wood to the tree, just to build a ladder up to branch where he would build the platform. Because of the weight grade of the nails (not to mention the quality of the wood), he could have managed with two to four nails each. While six nails may not sound like much, there were ten steps, adding up to 60 extra nails. Not only did the extra nails increase the cost of materials, but they ended up halting the project by killing the tree. If you've ever built something from a kit (whether it be a Lego™ creation or a disaster relief emergency home), you know that the kit does not account for error by providing additional pieces. When companies build these kits, they know that in order to be able to produce in large quantities, they must be efficient in resource use and eliminate waste. In your organization, a small inefficiency like extra nails used in building could add up to huge costs that will put additional strain on funding sources and restrict your impact. Applying Lean Six Sigma principles to your NGO will streamline processes and move you towards your goal.

Lean Six Sigma is a process that was developed at Motorola to eliminate defects in their phones or their service. According to their official coursework, "the whole philosophy of Six

Sigma is that everyone involved strives to achieve perfection by eliminating as many defects as possible and by making their products and services as efficient as possible”. (Aveta Business Institute). Six Sigma teaches that an inefficiency is the use of resources (human, capital, or natural) that do not contribute any added value to a product or service. It requires the insertion of feedback loops into multiple production steps, where defects can be caught early on, and non-value-added steps can be eliminated. Six Sigma focuses on achieving measurable and quantifiable goals.

Now the COO of a company, Matthew preaches efficiency to his employees. “Being more efficient means that you can do more with less or do more, faster. Whatever you’re trying to do, whatever your goal is, [efficiency] makes you better at doing that thing- that is, achieving your goal.” At his software development firm, Matthew audits the work of his staff to see where processes can be made more efficient, and uses frequent feedback loops to make the company more agile to growth and changes, which helps them achieve results more quickly and start making money (their goal, as a for-profit entity).

“Whatever you think about being efficient, you have to determine what resource you want to be efficient at. In businesses, it’s usually human resources or use of capital; other times, the business is optimizing for time. To determine how to be more efficient, you have to decide which resource you are looking to optimize, and how to leverage your other resources to achieve efficiency.” (Voska, 2017)

Matthew gave the example of efficiency in human capital, and how it can help a climate change education organization achieve their goals of advocacy and education: If 10% of volunteers or staff are doing finance tasks, they aren’t out on the streets advancing the organization’s cause. If that number can be reduced to 5%, while still accomplishing all the finance tasks through automation or better record keeping, it frees up more people to dedicate to achieving the organization’s core function. In the non-profit sector, this can be exceptionally

useful, because grant funders and donors typically look for non-profit organizations that have a high ratio of their operating budget going to programs, instead of administrative costs. By putting 5% of labor costs back into advocacy, the ratio will increase, not only making better use of the funding available, but opening up the organization to further funding opportunities.

Deciding what resource to optimize for requires determining what the limiting factor is. As the saying goes, “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link”. To make the chain stronger, you must identify the weak link and either strengthen it, or reduce the burden placed on that link. Using automation to on-board new volunteers, or creating a library of past presentations for others to “recycle” when asked to present to a new group of students are just two examples of ways that environmental NGOs try and increase efficiencies so that they can have a greater impact on a global scale.

Starting a new organization- whether it is a business or a non-profit, sounds exciting and adventurous. In reality, it can be tedious and overwhelming. Before deciding to start one, make sure there are no other groups that currently exist to collaborate with. Perhaps a new branch of the existing organization could be formed, or you can build off of a similar campaign that they have already. Using the strength and recognition of another organization can help your campaign to take off quicker, and require fewer resource investments to achieve its goals.

Strategic Planning.

Ideally, increased efficiency will allow you or your organization to accomplish more with the excess resources that were freed up. At that point, the question becomes not “how do we improve efficiencies?” but “how do we most efficiently use excess resources?” As your campaign or organization grows, processes will need to be developed to enable the structural capacity to expand as well. That may mean looking to expand the number of officer roles or

employing a staffer, or it could mean holding more events in larger spaces to accommodate more attendees. There will expectedly be some growing pains during this process, and it is imperative that open, inclusive dialogue is prioritized; **Nick Jones**, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Care About Climate, experiences some of this while creating the board of directors and writing the by-laws for Care About Climate,

“In the early stages of creating an organization, you have to have a lot of really uncomfortable conversations because you have to build out your processes, creating checks and balances... you have to have uncomfortable conversations because you are pretty much with other [organizational leaders] at the table saying ‘what would happen if [one of the other leaders] tries to abuse their power? Not that they would, but we have to decide what the procedure would be.’” (Jones, 2017)

The board’s job is to perform a final check on the officers of the organization to make sure they are acting in good faith of its members; it is a sounding board, extra set of eyes, and guiding force for strategy to meet its mission. As a founding member of the board, Nick had to help write the by-laws and organizational structure & hierarchy. “You shouldn’t take things personally because you’re building a structure that hopefully will outlast you so you can’t think about things as if it’s about you, it’s about your position.” He compared the process of being in the bridge of a ship, figuring out the best course for the organization to sail. As the organization grows, it’s as if the ship is moving into a larger body of water. It will test the construction of the ship (the by-laws and processes created by the board), as it is put to new tests.

For an effective board, diversity is considered by many to be the greatest necessity. Diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, job titles etc. allows for a diversity of thought and different methods of problem solving to be used simultaneously. People with different backgrounds can attack a problem from very different perspectives, which makes for a more thorough problem-solving process. Some organizations have developed a list to define the measures of an effective board.

According to the Sierra Club, an effective organization should have the following qualities:

- Is held together by values
 - Is driven by a mission
 - Identifies and establishes clear, quantifiable goals
 - Uses the organization-building cycle to strengthen itself
 - Reaches out and recruits
 - Communicates on a consistent basis
 - Supports & nurtures
 - Attracts resources (people and money)
 - Attracts diverse people with diverse skills
- (Wilson, Cox, & Arnett, 1999)

Sierra Club is one of the oldest environmental clubs in the United States, and has used these organizational structure guidelines to create chapters in all 50 states. They work “to explore, enjoy and protect the planet”. They balance environmental protection with the joy of the wilderness to attract diverse people and resources. They word all communications to tie directly back to the mission statement, and keep comments short and carefully scripted so that any quote taken out of context will support their mission and campaign goals. Finally, they recruit new members constantly in a push for continuous improvement. By reaching out to non-members as a rule for all communications, they expand their community and show that they are inclusive. They provide monthly communications to all members in the form of a magazine delivered by mail, as well as more urgent updates from their fundraising team, and their lobbying teams via email once or twice a week. This keeps members constantly engaged with the organization. They track growth and integrate feedback loops into their operations by providing ample opportunities for members to give their input during phone calls, in response to emails, and during chapter meetings. Board members are accessible and members take advantage of the opportunity to call them up and make recommendations as to the direction of the organization (Lucas, 2017).

From the start, successful non-profits must undertake data collection and analysis. Even in the first year of operating as a project, documentation will help the organization to have a basis off of which to grow. Documentation tasks may include collecting relevant data, archiving

documents, and noting things that worked. After events, meetings, or conferences, the team should sit down and take note of how it went, so that they can reflect and improve for the next time. When applying for grants and other funding sources, it will be important to show the impact that your organization has had since you began. When promoting yourself, there is very little that you need to do differently than had you been a business looking for investors. As a non-profit organization, the return on investment that you can offer to investor/donors is in terms of impact. How many people have you educated? How many lives were improved by improved public health, safer communities, or less pollution? In some cases, attempts have been made to quantify the value of protecting ecosystem services. Citizens for Conservation, an open land preservation and ecosystem restoration organization in Barrington, Illinois, USA, defends their annual budget and solicits donations from community members to fund their work in stormwater management, water purification, and general watershed protection. Because the community of Barrington uses community and private wells to source its water, clean water and full aquifers are important to residents. Just as a business has to justify to investors their spending and fluctuating profits to investors, a grant or donation recipient often has the same responsibility to prove results.

Part of the board's job is to ensure that the organization is continuously improving and moving in step with the mission. The board works to develop long-term strategies that will be implemented by the officers. The board should use the officers to provide feedback, the officers should collect feedback from the volunteers and program participants, and react accordingly.

In the book, *The Goal*, the character Alex Rogo and his team develop a five-step program for management to identify structural problems in their business and overcome them. Below, I have adapted this outline to apply directly to a NGO.

1. Identify the limitations on the organization's capacity (what is preventing growth? Limited time? Funds? Demand?)
2. Decide how to overcome these constraints (through maximizing the effectiveness of each use of the constrained resource)
3. Re-write short term or long term strategies to align the organization's direction and operations with the above decision (Maybe you can't send an officer to a conference because of resource constraints, but can use those resources to impact as many or more people through educational programs locally)
4. Elevate the system's constraints (Expanding the resource availability through hiring, onboarding/training volunteers, fundraising, marketing, etc.)
5. If in the previous steps, a constraint has been broke, repeat the steps, but do not allow inertia to cause a system's constraint.

(Goldratt, 1984, p. 307)

Strategy planning sessions should build on the reports provided by officers and an understanding of the organization's capacity in terms of human resources, financial resources, and public demand. Care should be taken to prepare for strategic growth by bringing on more officers, committee chairs, interns, or dedicated volunteers. By following the path that Alex Rogo recommends, conflicts and constraints to growth can be quickly identified to keep the organization growing, and allows the board or leadership team the time to develop strategies for expansion and continuous improvement. Keeping an efficient board will keep retention high and ensure that the board operates in accordance with the by-laws.

Conclusion

In using these strategies, I hope that you will be inspired to action, and have a better understanding of the tactics that will enable your campaign to grow sustainably. By learning from others and working collaboratively, we can achieve so much more than by working alone. Understand that this work is extraordinarily rewarding and extremely necessary, but it doesn't come without its challenges. But if you are truly passionate about protecting the environment, fighting for social justice, and leaving a better planet for future generations, then I invite you to remember this excerpt from Spanish poet, Alfredo Cuervo Barrero : *Queda Prohibido* (It is Forbidden). Translated from its original Spanish by M. Ouellette.

It is forbidden to cry without learning,
getting up one day without knowing what to do,
being afraid of your memories...

It is forbidden to not smile at your problems,
to not fight for what you want,
Abandoning everything to fear,
not converting your dreams into reality...

It is forbidden to not try to understand people,
to think that their lives are worth less than yours,
to not know that everyone has their own path and happiness...

It is forbidden to not create your history,
to not have a moment for people in need,
to not understand that what life gives you,
it can also take away...

It is forbidden to not look for happiness,
to not live your life with a positive attitude,
to not think that we can be better,
to not feel that without you, this world would not be the same

Queda Prohibido ~ Alfredo Cuervo Barrero. Translated by M. Ouellette (Cuervo Barrero)

Author Biography

Sarah Voska is a passionate environmental activist who works to educate and empower youth and adults about climate justice. She got her start as a concerned citizen involved in local government while in high school. Upset about the quality of the lake by her house, her father encouraged her to do something about it, and connected her with the community's lake management team. Working with them, she got her first experiences in municipal government, political persuasion, watershed management, and native wetland restoration.

Sarah works at Care About Climate as the director of the Online Youth Exchange (OYE). OYE is a capacity building program for international youth activists to learn about environmental issues, solutions, and BMPs around the world while connecting with likeminded individuals for peer mentorship, intercultural understanding, and friendship. She has represented Care About Climate as a delegate to the UNFCCC COP22 and COY13/COP23, in Marrakech, Morocco and Bonn, Germany, respectively, at the International Youth Summit for Energy & Climate Change in Tianjin, China and at the Association of Zoos & Aquariums conference in Indianapolis, USA. At COY13, she presented to youth on key skills for engaging others in climate activism. She has also interned with Food & Water Watch on a GMO labeling campaign and with Citizens for Conservation, focusing on ecosystem restoration in oak savannah ecosystems in the Chicagoland area.

Sarah is an avid traveler, foodie and linguist, and has spent much of her time as a distance-learning student at University of Wisconsin-Parkside traveling throughout South America and beyond. She speaks Spanish and Portuguese and sometimes forgets she is a Gringa.

Sarah can be contacted via email at svoska21@gmail.com.

Appendix

Definitions

COP: Conference of the Parties (to the UNFCCC)

COY: Conference of Youth, a conference that occurs in the weeks preceding COP where Youth develop policy goals and participate in workshops and sessions.

NGO: Non-governmental organization. In the context of this text, we will use it to refer to non-profit agencies (see below).

Non-profit: a corporation, organization or agency that operates in such a way that it does not earn a profit.

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Youth: Those persons between the ages of 18 to 30 years old. (United Nations)

Passion Assessment

Developed By Munholland United Methodist Church

Directions:

- 1) Complete the assessment on your own
- 2) There are no right or wrong responses
- 3) Don't be concerned about "whether or not it can be done" or how it can be done
- 4) Complete the assessment as if you have no obstacles to fulfilling your heart's desire.

Questions:

- 1) If I could snap my fingers and do anything, knowing I couldn't fail, what would I do?

- 2) At the end of my life, I'd love to be able to look back and know that I'd done something about:

- 3) If someone were to mention my name to a group of my friends, they would say that I am really interested/passionate about:

- 4) Conversations about _____ keep me talking late into the night:

If you are able to describe your passion, vocation or mission in a word or brief sentence, go to part 10. If you need more clarification, continue below.

- 5) What I would most like to do for others is:

- 6) The people I would most like to help are: (Circle

Infants	Children	Teens	Youth	University students	
Women	Men	Elderly	Unemployed	Career professionals	
Single parents	Divorced	Widowed	Parents	Singles	Teen Moms
Refugees	Poor	Homeless	Disabled	Prisoners	Hospitalized

- 7) The issues/causes I feel strongly about are

Environment	WASH	Climate Change	Water	Violence	Conflict/War
Poverty	Hunger	International	Education	Literacy	Economics
Women's Rights	Human Rights	Animal Rights	LGBT Rights	Indigenous Rights	
Family	Children	Elderly	Health care	Addiction	AIDS
Community	Religion	Racism	Politics	Technology	

8) List the top 5 positive experiences you have had in your life and briefly describe what you did and why it was meaningful to you.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Read through what you have written and look for an underlying theme throughout. Are there patterns in your answers? Specific age groups or needs that keep surfacing? Are you serving a similar role in different areas? Can you prioritize your concerns?

9) I think the area where I could make the most significant contribution is:

10) Based on my above answers, my passion/vocation/mission is:

Defining your campaign

In three paragraphs, you should be able to pitch your organization, campaign, and goal. It should mention what the desired solution is to the issue you are fighting, and use values to demonstrate why this issue is important. It should repeat your slogans and key points to be memorable and clear what you are working on. Fill in the blanks to develop a first draft of your campaign media guideline, social media bio, or elevator pitch.

[Sponsoring organization] is a [type: educational, non-profit, for profit, etc.] organization founded in [year] to [organizational mission]. We believe [value supporting campaign] for all [target audience of campaign].

In [local community], [Effects of inaction on the community] [benefit to community to support campaign]

Right now, the [Decision maker] is considering a proposal that would [Goal] giving consumers the choice and transparency we deserve. The [Name of Campaign] campaign was launched to support [Values supporting campaign]

Writing a Letter to the Editor or a Decision-Maker

Letter to the Editor Outline

1. Keep it straightforward and concise – get to the point (250 words or less).
2. Make it personal and heartfelt – why do you care?
3. Provide a specific, concrete action – what do you want readers/your decision maker to do?

Sample Letter:

It seems that each week brings new evidence of the dangers that hydraulic fracturing poses – from water contamination to health complications. Evidence released last week should provide new insight that makes it impossible to ignore the inherent hazards of fracking. The State of Pennsylvania for the first time released details of 243 cases where oil and gas corporations’ drilling activities contaminated the drinking water of Pennsylvania residents. It’s clear that the gas industry’s assurances of “safe drilling” is an oxymoron and that even the best regulations cannot protect our water or our health. The only way to protect New York and its communities is to ban fracking statewide. (Miller J., 2014)

Letter to a Decision Maker Outline

When writing to a decision maker, be sure to answer Nick Sauer’s Four Questions:

- 1) Who is opposed?
- 2) Who is in favor?
- 3) What is the benefit to their [area of influence/personal interests]?
- 4) What happens if they don’t act on this issue?

Sample letter:

Decision Maker,

Thank you so much for your commitment to the GasTown community and your leadership in governance. You have held your values of family and community first repeatedly in decision making. As a mother of three young children, I am concerned by the research coming from the World Health Organization and Harvard University School of Chemistry showing the dangers that hydraulic fracturing poses – from water contamination to health complications. Evidence released last week should provide new insight that makes it impossible to ignore the inherent hazards of fracking. The State of Pennsylvania for the first time released details of 243 cases where oil and gas corporations’ drilling activities contaminated the drinking water of Pennsylvania residents. It’s clear that the gas industry’s assurances of “safe drilling” is an oxymoron and that even the best regulations cannot protect our water or our health while fracking continues. The health of Pennsylvania residents and the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed is at stake. I urge you to support legislation in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to ban fracking in the state.

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