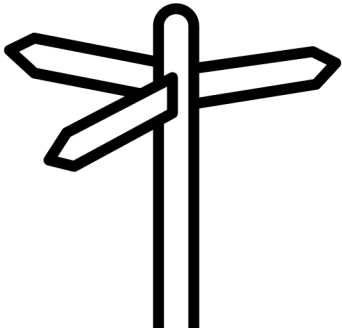


**Seeds for
Change**
In-depth guide



Campaign strategy

A guide to effective campaigning, and creating a strategic plan that gives you the best chance of winning!

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Introduction

This guide is for people who are campaigning to make the world more fair, equal and free.

Your campaign goal could be anything from international nuclear disarmament to a pedestrian crossing outside your kids' school! Or pushing for changes *within* your group or community - like making your social centre accessible to more people.

This guide gives pointers for how to create a strategic plan that gives you the best chance of winning. It also covers more general tips on how to campaign effectively, including building a strong campaign group and generating the maximum pressure to achieve your campaign goals.

Also see our guide *Facilitating Campaign Strategy Planning* which helps groups go through the process of deciding a campaign strategy together. Our *Messaging Strategy* guide helps you work out a plan for how your campaign communications can support your long term vision and goal.

Top Tips



Analyse the situation: a strategic plan is based on clear, agreed goals and analysing your context to work out how you can have the most power.

Build your capacity: Make a strategy for how you will build up momentum and active involvement in your own group – not just how you will put pressure on your opponents.

Maximise your impact: Make the most possible change in the outside world, by breaking down your goals, escalating pressure on the target, concentrating your energies and more...

Why campaign?

We define a campaign as a set of planned activities which combine to generate pressure to achieve a specific goal.

When there is so much injustice in the world, it can be hard to focus on a single specific goal. Achieving social justice or ecological sustainability means changing the way that the whole of society is organised. It is not enough to overturn one law, or improve the lives of one group of people.

However, we believe that focusing our energy on one (relatively) achievable campaign goal is an essential part of making bigger changes. It is one measurable step in the right direction, and enables us to build the skills, networks and empowerment to take on bigger goals in future.

Why strategy?

A campaign strategy is a plan for how you can best achieve your campaign goals, based on an analysis of your situation. It may also include thinking through how your tactics and ways of organising build your power to achieve your longer term vision.

Being strategic helps us make actual change - as opposed to chucking our energy at something without ever seeing an impact! It reduces the risk of burn-out, and increases the chance of winning!

Why plan ahead?

Grassroots groups are often campaigning with limited time and energy. There can be benefits to jumping in with both feet and just 'getting on with it' rather than spending lots of time in planning meetings!

However, by thinking things through and analysing our situation first, we can make conscious decisions about the way forward that is most likely to work. A clear plan enables everyone to pull together, predict issues that might arise and make the most of opportunities. Looking ahead means we can plan our capacity realistically, and keep going for the long haul.

Two sides of strategy

Your strategy needs to answer two questions:

- What outward-facing course of action will best help you achieve your goals?
- How you can build up the capacity of the campaign group itself, so that that pressure can be sustained and increased over time?

Outward-facing course of action

This is a coherent set of activities that build upon each other and generate pressure to achieve your goals. This usually means deciding on:

Targets: These are organisations or individuals that have power in the situation, which you can put pressure on to create a change.

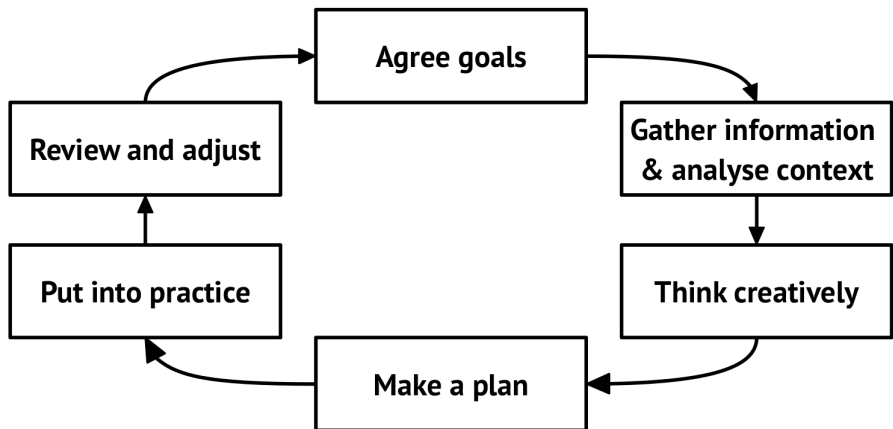
Tactics: These are the concrete activities you will do as part of your campaign, for example street theatre or a petition.

Capacity-building

Your capacity is the time, energy, skills and resources that the people in your campaign are able to use to further your aims. A brilliant plan without the capacity to put it in practice is nothing more than a piece of paper.

Your strategic plan should decide upon how you can best increase the capacity of your group, by drawing in more people, finding effective ways to organise, developing your skills and addressing any barriers to people being actively involved. You can also boost the capacity of your campaign by finding ways of drawing on support or working with people from outside your group.

A process for deciding your strategy



A strategic campaign plan is based on agreeing clear aims or goals, and then analysing your situation to work out how you can have the most impact. The strategy process isn't finished once the plan is made. Evaluate your impact as you go along, review whether the plan is working, and make any adjustments you need to. We go into more detail in our guide to *Facilitating Campaign Strategy Planning*, here's a summary:

Agree your goals

Come up with a clear, concrete goal that you can all agree to work towards as the outcome of your campaign. This can be used to guide all your decision making, and to measure your success.

You may also be guided by a longer term vision or set of values you want the world to be organised by. This is important for guiding your decision

making. However, it is different from your campaign goal, which is something concrete enough you can make a plan for how to achieve it.

Gather information and analyse your context

Gather information about your situation, and analyse it to help you decide how you can best have an impact. For example, ask who has power, who is sympathetic to your cause and how you might be able to influence them. It is equally important to assess the strengths of your group and the skills and resources people can offer.

Think creatively

Think creatively about different ways to achieve your goals. Make space for new ideas, and then assess which will work based on your analysis.

Make a plan

Pull together a way forward that you can agree on. Make sure the plan includes how you will build the capacity of your group and campaign as well as what your outward-facing course of action will be.

Put it in practice

You can best work out if your plan is effective by implementing it, and seeing what impact you are having!

Review and adjust the plan

Once you have been implementing your strategy for a little while, make time to evaluate. Ask yourselves how well things are working, what impact you are having and whether anything about your situation has changed. Then work out if the plan can stay in place as it is, or if you need to make adjustments to give yourselves a better chance of success.

Key principles for maximising impact

The impact of your campaign is the thing that actually changes as a result of what you do. This is the essential measure of whether your strategy is working. These tips should help you be as powerful as possible, whatever situation you are campaigning in.

Evaluate the impact on your goals

Whenever you are making a decision about what to do, ask yourselves: 'What are we trying to achieve? What is the likely impact of doing this on our goals and our group?' After an event or action, evaluate it by the same criteria, and apply the learning to the next thing you do.

Even if you don't do any advance planning at all, this will help you be more strategic. In order to assess what impact something is likely to have, remember to consider how it affects the capacity of your group, as well as how it might put pressure on your target. For example, how will it affect your time, energy, resources, morale, relationships, dynamics and any other factors that affect how easily people can stay involved?

Escalate pressure on your target

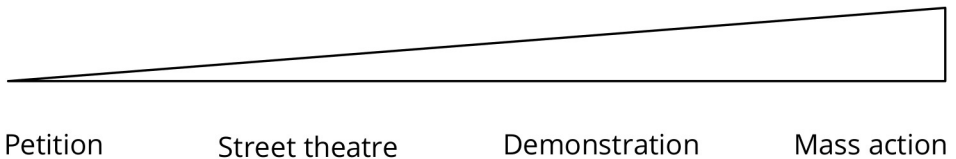
One way to look powerful to your target is to follow a planned escalation, so each tactic you use has a bigger impact than the one before.

This can also have a psychological impact on your allies and potential group members. A campaign that is growing looks dynamic and successful, and may be more likely to draw new people in.

Another way of looking powerful to your target is simply to chuck

absolutely everything you have at it in a short burst of activity. This can work, but the risk is that if you aren't successful within a short time, it can be hard to sustain the energy of your group. The target may also realise the worst is over, and decide you aren't much of a threat.

If you go for the planned escalation approach, you may need to deliberately hold back on your 'strongest' tactics in order to keep something in reserve. For example, if you are approaching a company to encourage them not to sign a contract with an unethical project, you might start with an email, then send a couple of people to visit their office, then have a small picket outside with a couple of banners, then hold a big demo in the street outside and finally do a mass occupation inside the office building.



Break down your goals

We emphasise a lot in this guide that a campaign goal should be concrete and achievable. However, you may not be able to make a plan for how you will achieve that goal all in one go. You may need to break it down, and work out some more immediate steps that are easier to achieve and will put you in a stronger position.

Breaking down your goals increases your impact, because it means you are able to focus on something which you can actually achieve. This makes it possible to come up with a plan that is realistic and that you can put into practice.

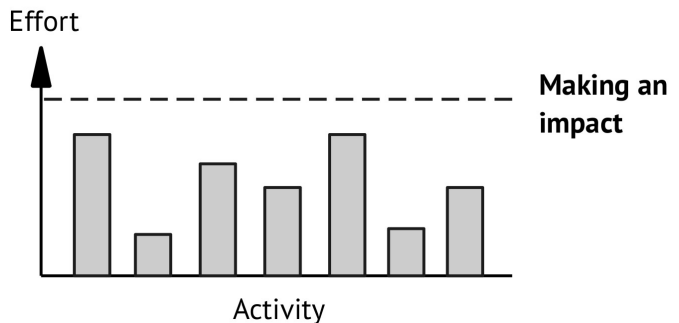


For example, if you want equal pay for everyone in your workplace, a first step to put you in a stronger position might be to get a trade union recognised. This example also shows how important it is to think forwards even when choosing a shorter term goal – which union you choose to join will have a big impact on whether it helps you meet your longer term goals!

Concentrate your energies

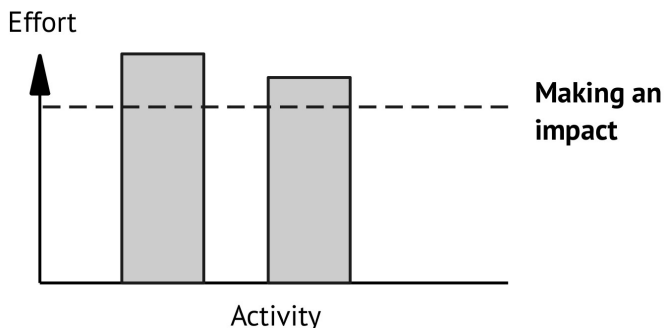
Groups often take a scatter-gun approach to choosing activities – doing things against lots of different targets or focused on multiple issues. A downside of this approach is that it becomes hard to measure your impact or build up a critical mass of pressure to actually make change.

An idea we can borrow from the world of business is the ‘threshold effect’. The belief is that we need to concentrate a certain amount of energy on achieving one thing in order for it to have an impact. The same amount of energy distributed between lots of different goals will be wasted, because we will never go over the threshold where we actually achieve what we want. For example, one action against each of ten targets may just cause momentary annoyance to each one, whereas ten actions against one target will really be felt!



The first bar graph shows a ‘scatter-gun’ scenario where we put in the same amount of effort overall, but don’t cross the line and actually achieve our goals.

In the second bar graph, we achieve a lot more by focusing the same energy on a smaller number of objectives.



Of course, like all ideas from business, we may want to take this with a pinch of salt! Some of the things we are trying to achieve are hard to measure, or say in a black and white way whether we have made an impact or not. For example 'a more empowered community' or 'feminist culture change'. But the key point of concentrating energy and thinking concretely about what is changing as a result still applies!

Be pro-active

Look for ways you can take control of the agenda, instead of simply reacting to what comes at you from your target. That will make it easier for you to create your own plans where you can decide on the timescale and manage your capacity. It will help you feel empowered and give your target the feeling that you are calling the shots.

For example, try setting up situations where you know you will succeed – and then use the good publicity that comes out of that. For example, getting a motion passed in support of your campaign in a sympathetic council may be entirely symbolic – if the council doesn't really have the power to make relevant changes. However, it can be a springboard for publicity, and create a feel-good factor around something having worked.

Similarly, remember you have a choice about whether to react to things the target does. For example, if a company creates a tokenistic 'public engagement exercise' make a conscious choice about whether it will be useful to engage. You also have the option to expose the ways it has been set up to not really listen to you, and otherwise ignore it!

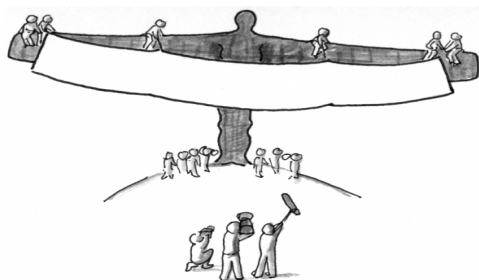
In a long-running campaign, it is common for the target to simply go quiet for months or even years while your campaign loses energy. This means that when they come back, you have to start from scratch again, building up opposition. Work out what you can do in these periods to keep your group strong. For example, you could organise a speaker tour or create your own media to reach out to people in other parts of the country or region. Or divert your group energy temporarily into organising something positive for your community or to tackle a related issue in order to stay connected and powerful.

Look out for opportunities

As well as a pre-planned sequence of events, also be ready to spot opportunities. You can massively increase your impact by being quick off the mark in the right moment. For example, if your issue suddenly comes into the news, it is a chance to get a lot more coverage for your campaign.

Have some ideas up your sleeve you can pull out at the critical moment. That could be a stunt with great visuals. It could also be as simple as being ready with banners, placards, a location and contact lists to put on a last minute demonstration.

It is ideal if you have a group of people with flexible availability, who can do the publicity work as soon as possible afterwards. Prepare yourselves with media contacts lists, and sample quotes about the issue so you can get press releases out quickly. Take photos of your actions to go with your mainstream and social media communications.



Build your capacity

Your capacity is the time, energy, skills and resources that the people in your campaign are able to use to further your aims.

Sometimes your capacity grows naturally, as more people hear about your campaign, feel inspired to get involved, and learn new skills through campaigning.

However, it's important to recognise that your capacity can shrink naturally as well! People may drop away because they are burnt out, discouraged or just plain bored. Or they may turn up to a big event, but never get absorbed into active membership of your group.

Therefore, it is important to have a plan for how you will build the capacity of your campaign. This is as essential as deciding what outward-facing activities you will do.

Capacity-building in your own group

The strength of the group that is running the campaign is one of the most important factors in your success. As part of that group, one of your most important tasks is making sure new people can get involved, and also making sure you are organising in a way that will make the group work for you all across the long-haul.

Getting involved could mean people turning up to events that you have organised, or doing low key things you've supported them to do, for example putting up a window poster you provided. However, if the campaign is to be truly sustainable and empowering, you need to enable more people to get involved in doing the actual organising as well as simply joining in with things.

A final strand is looking after the group itself in an ongoing way. This means supporting each other to build sustainable work patterns and

healthy relationships. It also includes identifying and dealing with issues that limit the effectiveness of your group - for example unhealthy power dynamics, access barriers and unaddressed conflict.

All these areas overlap, but for simplicity we've split our tips into three categories:

- enabling people to join in
- enabling people to be part of organising the campaign
- sustaining the group over the long haul

Enabling people to join in the campaign

Joining in is anything that creates or contributes to actual change, on however small a level. That could mean activities we usually think of as 'campaigning' like turning up to a demonstration. Alternatively, it may be things we do in our day to day lives, like challenging a neighbour's racist jokes, babysitting a friend's kids so they can attend a meeting or pressurising their children's school to address homophobic bullying.

Some ways of enabling more people to join in:

Prioritise publicity: Do it well in advance. Use a variety of methods so you reach the widest pool of people. Always include information about how to get involved, including things that can be done from home.

Put on training or share resources to help people get active. For example: 'How to have difficult conversations about racism', 'Know your rights on an action', 'Making banners out of bedsheets'.

Create easy ways to give support: For example, make a template letter people can sign and send to your campaign target, distribute posters and stickers, provide easy ways to engage on social media or organise low commitment events like a short rally that people can just turn up to.

Enabling people to get involved in organising

Organising is any activity that supports more people to come together to be more powerful. For example doing logistics for a meeting, getting

together with co-workers to stand up to your boss or publicising events that are happening.

Some ways to make it easier for more people to get involved in organising:

Meetings: prioritise making your meetings welcoming and accessible, and making space for everyone to be heard.

Action points: make sure these don't default to 'the usual suspects'. Try creating a list of all the action points in the meeting – then encouraging everyone to take on at least one if they are able.

Support: organise skillshares, buddy systems, how-to guides and other ways of enabling more people to take tasks on.

Prioritise inclusive socials and relationship building: Create opportunities for people to get to know each other, including as part of campaign tasks like banner-making. These events are often most successful if at least some of the established members set themselves the task of talking to new people and anyone who's on their own.

Sustaining the group for the long haul

This is anything that enables everyone in the group to stay involved for as long as they would like to, and to feel empowered and committed enough to put forward their ideas and follow through on plans the group makes.

See our *Effective Groups* guide for a lot more detail, here are some brief pointers:

Share out power and responsibility: If your group is too reliant on one or two people it can cause disempowerment for everyone else, and create problems if those people step back or burn out. Even if you choose individuals to take on specific roles (e.g. having an elected secretary who always takes minutes) try to make space for other people to also take responsibility. One effective way of doing this is having multiple sub-groups with different people in each, e.g. a media working group, or a temporary group planning an event.

Prioritise accountability: This includes creating a culture where people

follow through on their action points or pass them on – as well as having ways to deal with harmful behaviours. It helps to be very clear about what decisions should be made where, who is responsible for what and how to ask for people if needed.

Address barriers: find out what is putting people off from getting involved – for example, power dynamics, conflict or access issues. Look for ways to address them!

Schedule your activities to build momentum

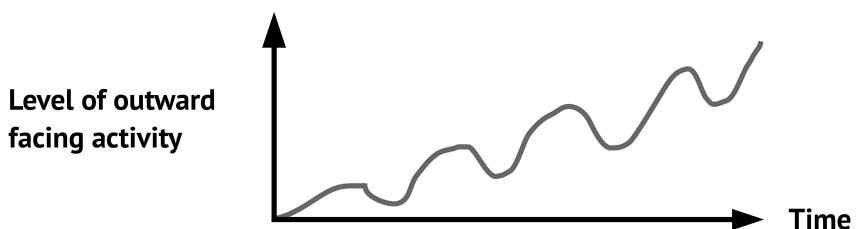
The way that you time and sequence your actions can play a big role in how successfully you sustain and grow the energy of the campaign.

Whatever plans you make need to incorporate time for two things:

- recovery for anyone who has been involved in a 'big push' of lots of work in a short period (e.g. organising a big event)
- enabling new people to integrate into the group, and get involved in active organising.

A key thing is to predict when you will need to be focusing all your energy at outward facing activities. For example, a big event or action you are organising, or an external event like a planning enquiry. These are often the same moments where new people get to hear about the campaign, and there is a potential for them to get involved.

A helpful pattern is to follow these high 'outward energy' moments with a planned period that allows for both recovery and integrating the people who have just found out about the campaign. The diagram shows how a campaign can build momentum over time, with temporary dips in outward-facing activity.



In a big flurry of activity, it can feel hard to prioritise planning for what happens afterwards. However, many people under-estimate how tired they will feel after the adrenaline rush is over. Once the big event has happened, it is very common for people to simply disengage in order to get some rest. Disengaging isn't a problem in itself, and rest is a necessary part of sustainable campaigning! The problem is if several people step back unexpectedly at the same time, and the people who are left struggle to make decisions without them. This brings a risk that the group loses energy, and you miss the opportunity to bring in new people or to start building towards the next thing.

Some options to try:



Set up a working group that deliberately steps back from planning the big action, and reserves energy for organising follow up events like trainings.

Have a clear date for when you will start again with planning outward-facing actions, after an appropriate period for recovery. Appoint some people in advance to prepare and publicise the first meeting. This allows everyone else to disengage from decision-making for a period, with a clear commitment to go back to it after a break.

Follow the initial big action with something easy to organise and low-stress like a group picnic which allows new people to start building relationships and allows established group members to stay connected without it feeling too much like work.

Use the big action to get new people signed up on rotas for any routine tasks that will carry on like a weekly leafleting session. At a minimum, collect contacts, and prepare things to help new people feel connected to the campaign, like stickers and window posters to take away.

Support from beyond your group

A big factor in the success of your campaign is whether you can get effective support from more people and organisations than are in your immediate group.

Allies

There are people or organisations who don't have an immediate stake in the issue, but may be able to lend their support, with your group in the lead. For example, home-owners offering their time to a tenants union. Or in a campaign against road-building spear-headed by the local community, allies might be people or groups from other areas who turn up to the events you organise.

Think carefully what allies you prioritise and reach out to. Consider:

Who is sympathetic to your cause? For example, an animal rights campaign might publicise events to vegan social groups.

Who has access to useful resources? For example, a meeting space you want to use for free.

Who has influence over your campaign goals? For example an LGBTQ+ parent and teachers' group might seek out supportive school governors.

Before approaching potential allies, think carefully about what you want to achieve through their support. If it is important to you that your group continues to take the lead in the campaign, be clear about that from the outset. For example, a disabled people's campaign might allow non-disabled people in minor roles, but not to take part in decisions.

Coalitions and networks

A coalition is a collection of groups working together towards the same goals. Each group keeps its own separate identity, and makes some decisions independently of the rest, but campaign strategy decisions are usually made together.

Coalitions often involve multiple local groups coming together regionally or nationally in order to campaign for or against policies which affect all

of them.

Sometimes, coalitions include sets of people who would ordinarily have different objectives, but work together on a specific issue. For example, kayakers and anglers often have conflicting interests – and environmentalists may not be particularly aligned with either! However the three groups are currently engaged in a coalition against a damaging hydro-electric project on the river Conwy.

Working as part of a bigger group can give you a lot more capacity and power. Think carefully beforehand about how much similarity there is between your long and short term goals, and how you can support each other without compromising any of your objectives.

Outward-facing course of action

This is the bit that people usually think of as a campaign strategy! We have put it at the end of this guide because we wanted to emphasise capacity-building which is often overlooked.

A course of action is a set of activities which you combine in order to achieve your goal. This usually means breaking those goals down – working out what you need to achieve in what order to reach your bigger aim.

In the spirit of concentrating your energies, rather than doing a random scatter of different activities, try choosing just one or two targets, and one or two forms of pressure, and then fit a wide range of tactics within that.

Targets

Any person or organisation (player) who has power in relation to your campaign goals is a potential target. The target of your campaign is whichever of these players you are trying to influence.

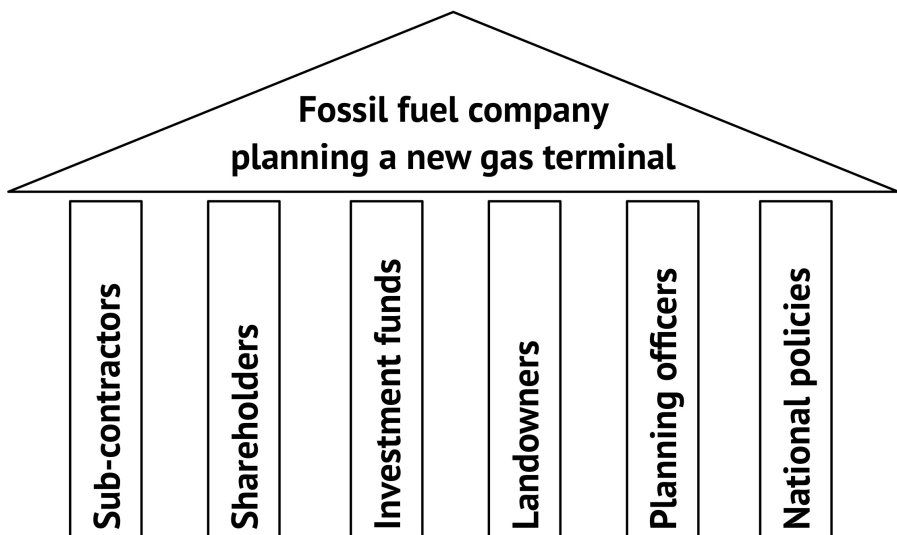
The most obvious target will be the player doing the thing you are trying to stop – the main company behind a new coal mine, or the politicians bringing in a particularly unjust law. Alternatively, it might be the player with the power to bring in the change you want to see – for example the head-teacher if your goal is a pro-active racial justice policy in your school.

However, it can often be more effective to focus on a 'secondary' target. That is any person or organisation that supports and enables the main player. Usually secondary targets are less committed to the issue, so it can be easier to influence them. Common examples are sub-contractors,

like suppliers, haulage companies or construction firms. Secondary targets could also include potential allies with a lot of influence – for example, major NGOs who could publicly support your campaign.

This visual provides a useful way of thinking about secondary targets. On the top is the main player. The supporting pillars are any group or organisation that plays a necessary role in enabling the main player. By putting pressure on one or two pillars you may be able to stop the problem just as effectively as by going more directly at the main target.

See 'Ways of putting pressure on' (next page) to help you choose which targets you can best influence.



Ways of putting pressure on your target

With a player in mind, decide on a clear concrete goal for what you want to change. For a primary target this might be your campaign goal, e.g.: 'home office ends deportation policy'. For a secondary target it might be 'airline stops running deportation flights'.

To work out how to influence the player, consider what kind of a stake they have in the issue, and how committed they are. Are they involved because of their ideology, do they stand to gain financially or are they simply going along with something because it's convenient or they've never questioned it? Think where you have points of leverage – for example a company that trades on its 'ethical' image is likely to be sensitive to PR damage.

We have listed forms of pressure often used by campaign groups, and some key criteria for when they are effective. As well as working out what is likely to influence your target, think through ethical and legal implications, and any impacts that could have on your group!

Economic pressure: making it more expensive for a player to act against your campaign goals – effective if the player is financially insecure!

Delay: slowing down progress on the project you are opposing – effective if it is time-sensitive!

Direct pressure on decision-makers: this is effective if they have sympathy for your cause, are sensitive to public opinion, or the campaign inconveniences them enough that it is easier for them to support your goals than go against them!

Withdrawing co-operation: as a group, stopping any activity in which the target depends on you, e.g. going on rent-strike, or refusing to obey a law that is designed to control you, like people burning passbooks in apartheid South Africa. This is effective if the target actually does depend on you for something, and a sufficient number of people join in.

Official channels: using the courts, planning system or lobbying politicians to act on your behalf. Effective if you have a reasonable chance of them doing what you want! Can also be useful to create delay while you build up other kinds of pressure.

PR offensive: exposing unethical practices or dishonesty. Effective if the player is dependent on a good reputation with the public.

Tactics

These are the specific activities you will do in order to achieve your goals. Examples include demonstrations, strikes, petitions, letter-writing, occupying public space, boycotts, street parties, subvertising, flash-mobs, pop-up art installations etc. You don't need to plan your tactics a long time in advance – just have an idea that there will be a range of things you can do that create the kind of pressure you think will be effective and work well for the people involved in your campaign.

Make sure that when you choose tactics, you consider the impact on your group capacity as well as on your target. A very 'powerful' tactic may weaken the campaign in the long run if it takes more energy than the group currently has. Remember that the consequences of different actions varies a lot depending on each person's their situation. Make space for sub-groups to use very different tactics. For example, 'delay' could be achieved by a combination of: challenges through the planning system, mass demonstrations in key locations and small groups doing direct action.

Timeline

Work out what you are going to do in what order. That could include breaking down your goals and working out what objectives you need to work on in what order.

It is also about how you sequence your tactics to maximise your impact, for example following a planned escalation so the target is under increasing pressure.

The timeline may need to be adjusted later if you spot new opportunities or decide that things aren't working the way you hoped. However, at this stage having a rough plan going forwards will help you put in practice all the key principles for how to maximise impact on your goals.

Campaign strategy

This guide gives pointers for how create a strategic plan that gives you the best chance of winning. Being strategic helps us make actual change - as opposed to chucking our energy at something without ever seeing an impact! The guide also covers a lot of more general tips on how to campaign effectively, including building a strong campaign group and generating the maximum pressure to achieve your campaign goals.

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