

The Power Map Exercise

The Power Map Exercise is a facilitated brainstorm in which the participants suggest ways in which they can act to make it easy for a decision maker to say “yes” to public policies. It is used in the beginning steps of organizing a campaign to change public policy or to teach advocacy and strategic thinking.

The essence of advocacy organizing is making it easy for a policy maker to say “yes”. As advocates that is our job. We are the ones asking for a change in the status quo and the ones asking for the public and businesses to operate differently. Therefore, the burden is on us to make it easy for the decision maker to say yes. There is any number of ways to do that work. We must first ask, “Who can say yes and give us what we want?” The better the job we do compiling persuasive information **and** organizing public support, the more likely we will be successful.

The Power Map

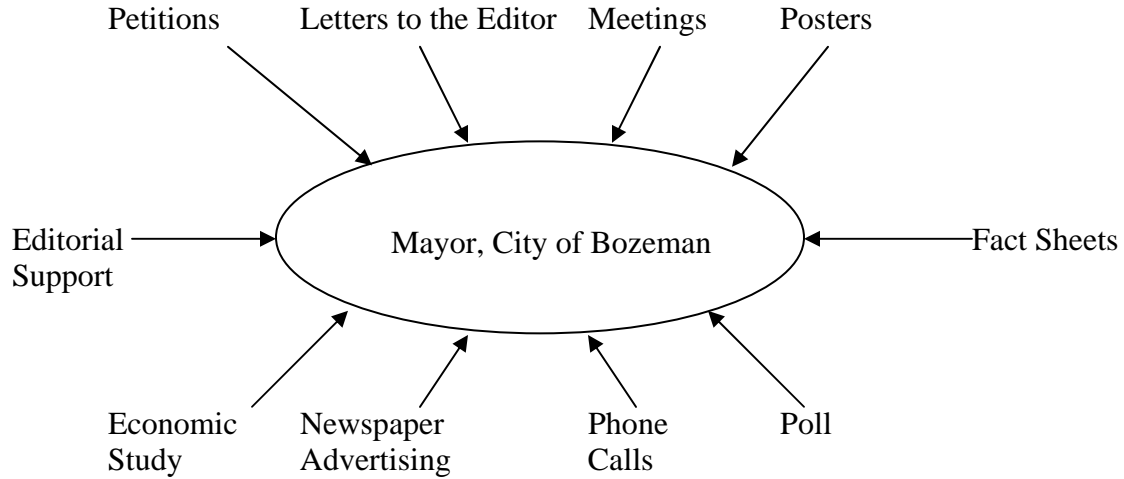
Advocacy is successfully using proven public support techniques in an organized campaign to build power and pressure for your issue. Once we identify the appropriate decision maker(s), we must take time to determine specific steps that will allow both persuasion (information) and pressure (public support) to be effective.

The exercise is started by drawing a circle in the center of white board or several pieces of newsprint on a wall. Inside of the circle we put the name or title of the decision maker or makers we want to say “yes.” Since we all do smart growth work, we interact with decision makers like the board of health, the city commission, the mayor, budget committee, taxation committee, the legislature, and the governor. While any of these decision makers could be selected it is best to start within the field of experience for the group you are working with for this exercise – for example the board of health or the city commission.

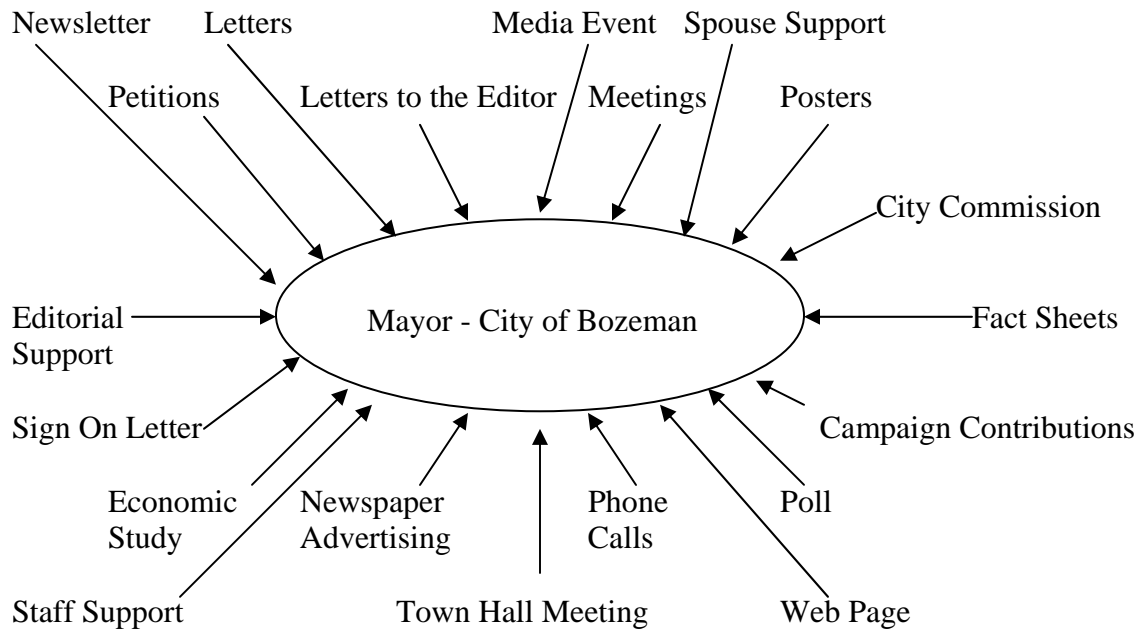
Next, state the policy objective (for example), “We want to pass a complete streets policy for the city of Bozeman, Montana.” Then ask, “How can we make it easy for the city commission to say yes to adopting a complete streets policy?”

Once the circle is drawn and the decision maker is placed inside the circle, you ask the group to think about all the things that can be done to make it easy for the decision maker to say “yes.” Use a strict brainstorming technique where you go around the room and get everyone’s input so no one person dominates. Continue to ask the question, “How can we make it easy for _____ to say yes?” Ask folks to be specific in their responses. Don’t just list “media” but specify what type of media (for example letters to the editor).

A Sketch of the Power Map



After The Second Round Sketch



Pressure Work

- Letters
- Poll
- Phone Calls
- Etc.

Persuasion Work

- Economic Study
- Poll (without organizing)
- Fact Sheets (without organizing)
- Etc.

Explaining the Difference between Persuasion and Pressure

Midway through the exercise, it is important to begin the discussion of the difference between **persuasion and pressure**. Most often the group will focus on persuasion techniques – studies, fact sheets, economic research, etc. as the focus of their work. Generally, most smart growth advocates will spend 80% of their time developing information and studies (persuasion) in hopes of winning the day, and just 20% of their time will be committed to pressure. To be successful our campaigns need to flip this equation where 80% of the time and resources are used to develop pressure techniques and 20% is used in simply persuasion efforts. Clearly they go hand in hand but the proportion of time and resources needs to be properly distributed.

Tips for Running the Power Map Exercise

Choose a scenario that is realistic or choose the actual situation the group faces. If the power map exercise is used as a strategic thinking tool but not for an actual situation it is important that the scenario be as real as possible. But the scenario should not be about a previous or current campaign. This could get the group off track and thinking about what did and did not work. Remember this is an exercise to think about how to do *future* work.

Use good group facilitation and brainstorming techniques. It is sometimes easy to get bogged down in the details or for one person to dominate the group. Be prepared to move the group in a different direction if needed. Be prepared to introduce known successful pressure ideas into the discussion or to clarify points that are vague or too general. Make the exercise fun and high energy.

Types of Items to be on the Power Map

- Community Event & Meeting
- Stickers
- Letters to Editor
- News Release
- Posters
- Radio Advertising
- Flyer
- Weekly Newspaper Column
- Guest Talk Show
- Poll
- Fact Sheets

- Opinion/Editorial
- Web Page
- Strong Message
- Leaflet
- Public Display
- Drive Time Display
- Editorial Endorsement
- Canvas
- Door to Door Literature Drop
- Video
- Media Event
- Talk Radio Call-in Show
- Television Advertising
- Yard Signs
- Newsletter
- Economic Study
- Feature Story
- Billboard
- Petitions
- Sign-on Letter
- Coalition
- Newspaper Advertising
- E-organizing – e-mails
- Phone Calls
- Direct Mail
- Opinion Leader Calls
- Etc.