



Strategic Events:

Expanding the Impact of Your Campaign

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Agenda

- Strategic Events
- Wisconsin Event
- Power Prism – a campaign planning tool

What is a Strategic Event?

- Sample Events
 - “Soft” Events
 - “Hard” Events

Expanding Your Impact

- What is possible?
 - More media coverage
 - More volunteers
 - More support from decision-makers
 - More leaders
 - More power
 - Stronger coalition/campaign
 - Policy gains
 - Less work

Impact

- Need a reason to “organize”; to communicate
- A strategic event creates an opportunity to:
 - build new relationships;
 - recruit new coalition/campaign partners;
 - involve grassroots
 - engage potential allies;
 - raise money;
 - involve volunteers; and
 - to work directly with the public and the news media.

Impact

- Learning how to do effective community outreach and community events requires:
 - **planning;**
 - **attention to detail;**
 - **focus on recruitment;**
 - **focus on turnout; and**
 - **follow-up.**

Impact

- Set goals and objectives
- Practice; build for the long-term
- Focus on what you do well and expand
- Relationship, relationship, relationship

Policy Campaign Lesson from Kentucky

“It is not about the will to win.”

“It’s about the will to build the capacity to win.”

Holding a Strategic Event

Purpose:

- Communicate
- Identify new contacts
- Showcase your work
- Relay a broader message
- Practice
- Legitimize
- Educate
- Build power

Set Event Purpose & Outcome Goals

- For Your Campaign
- For Your Community (situation & timing)
- For Grassroots Involvement & Recruitment
- For Grasstops
- For Your Coalition
- For Your Media Campaign

Event Planning Phases

- Front-end Organizing
- Day-of Organizing
- Back-end Organizing

Planning

- Resources
- Timeline
- Capacity
- Risk – Private & Public
- Message, Messenger, Image
- Next Event – Sequencing

Front-end Organizing

- Campaign – enhancements
- Community – private and/or public
- Grassroots – testing
- Grasstops
- Coalition – testing
- Media – private and/or public & “deep media”

Day-of Organizing

- Campaign – running on all cylinders
- Community – are we communicating to the right people with the right message?
- Grassroots – involvement, building
- Grasstops – involvement, building
- Coalition – involvement, building
- Media – coverage, message, messenger, image

Back-end Organizing

- Decision-makers
- Community – follow-up communications
- Grassroots – follow-up, new leadership
- Grasstops – expand our base
- Coalition – new involvement, recruitment
- Media – “deep” media, follow-thru, etc.
- Campaign – accomplish our goals, adjustments

Logistics

- Checklist
- Responsible Person/Team
- Back-up System
- Venue – feel, image, etc.
- Recruitment

Turn-out

- Set your target goal – *Rule of Halves*
- Active:
 - Phone-banking
 - Calls
 - One on One communications
- Passive:
 - Mailings
 - Advertising
 - Earned Media, etc.

Coalition/Campaign Building

- Did you engage your coalition?
- New coalition outreach, new members, did you move them up the involvement ladder?

Media & Outreach

- Message, messenger, image
- Media relations
- *Deep media* – giving your story “legs”
- Opponents
- Create organizing and communication opportunities

Evaluation

- Outcomes – keep a record of materials, methods, results
- Moving forward – how to enhance, advance

Anatomy of a Strategic Event

- Find the “hook”
- Identify right messengers
- Leverage field strength
- Aggressive media outreach

Case Study: Wisconsin High Speed Rail Tour



Case Study: Wisconsin High Speed Rail Tour

Goals:

- Get Wisconsinites talking about the benefits of High Speed Rail.
- Build support for Governor Doyle's work to bring federal transportation funding to Wisconsin.
- Enhance WISPIRG's statewide influence.
- Strengthen the organization.

Case Study: Wisconsin High Speed Rail Tour

The challenge:

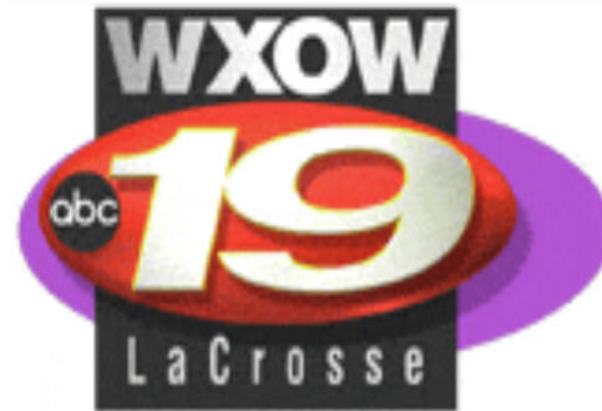
- Develop a strategy to organize statewide activists & grassroots allies, *and* leverage statewide media interest.

Case Study: Wisconsin High Speed Rail Tour

The Solution:

- Launch a statewide High Speed Rail tour with events in ten communities. Rely upon grassroots allies and student activists to build successful events that meet all goals.

News coverage included...



HSR Event: Breaking it down

They found a timely, newsworthy hook.

- *Jobs and the economy:*
“Building high speed rail in Wisconsin would create jobs and rebuild our hurting economy, all while reducing our dependence on oil and curbing global warming pollution.”
- *Improving quality of life:*
“High speed rail can provide real alternatives for getting from Chicago to the Twin Cities.”

They drew upon their grassroots strength while providing critical central support.

- PIRG staff served as central command, providing training, hierarchy, and overall strategy
- Student committee empowered to oversee statewide event coordination
- Students had autonomy, clearly defined roles in shaping individual events

They recruited grasstops leaders and influential elected officials to serve as event ambassadors.

- Convinced 15 federal, state, and local leaders to speak at 10 events
- Partnered with community allies (League of Women Voters, rail advocates, others) to get the message out

They conducted aggressive media outreach around each of the 10 events.

- PIRG staff & students alerted press to events with media advisories featuring guest speakers
- Initiated follow-up calls, reiterating interesting visual opportunities
- Issued press release ahead of each event, touting HSR benefits for Wisconsin

Hindsight is 20/20: Looking back

HSR Lessons Learned

- Ten events was ambitious
- While there was huge community interest, more could have been done to cultivate top allies, especially alternative voices (minority, faith, business groups, etc.)
- In bigger markets (i.e. Madison and Milwaukee), gaining media interest was very difficult. But in smaller markets (i.e. LaCrosse), nearly every outlet in town attended.

Building Power at the Moment

Policy campaigns are won or lost
due to a multitude of factors.

BUT a policy campaign cannot be won
without building, strengthening and
sustaining power.

ADVOCACY POWER PRISM

Can we build more power for our mission by triggering any or all "power tools"?

**Internal
or
External
Campaign
Event**



The Six Power Tools

1. Research & Data Collection
2. Coalition Building & Maintenance
3. Fundraising & Development
4. Grassroots & Key Contacts
5. Media Advocacy
6. Decision-Maker Advocacy

Research & Data Collection

- **What information do you need to advance your goals?**
- **What information do you need about decision-makers?**
- **What information do you need to have a compelling story?**

Coalition Building & Maintenance

- **Based on MOTIVATED SELF-INTEREST**
 - Which other organizations share your mission?
 - Which other organizations share your vision?
 - Which other organizations embrace your tactics and strategies as a means for fulfilling their own mission and vision?
 - Are there opportunities to expand?

Fundraising & Development

- Are you keeping past, current and prospective funders in the loop - sharing good news & needs?
- Do you have 2 budgets? High - Low
- What are potential funding sources to cover expenses?
- Do you have the skills, knowledge and relationships to tap potential funding?
- What might you convince others to kick in for free (in-kind)?

Grassroots & Key Contacts

- Who is your core constituency?
- Who is your target constituency?
- How can you organize them?
- How can you connect them to relevant decision-makers?
- Do you have easy-to-reach grassroots & key contacts in all relevant communities?
- Are you collecting relevant personal stories?

Media Advocacy

- Do you have the tools to “do” media advocacy well?
- What are your key message points?
- Do you have relationships with key media?
- Do you have a “deep media” strategy?
- Do you have credible spokespersons for key topics?

Decision-Maker Advocacy

- How much do you know about your decision makers?
- How much do your targets know about you?
- Are you proactively creating HERO OPPORTUNITIES for allies and would-be allies?
- Are you a “presence” in spheres of influence?