

Organizing our Organizations: The States of Chang(ing) the World

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Thinking about Power

- *Power is the ability to make things happen*
- In individual advocacy, we work to increase the power of an individual to overcome a problem, and interact with the power of gatekeepers and institutions
- In systemic advocacy, we seek to alter the balance of power between systems that impact the lives of many individuals, and these individuals and their/our organizations.
- Power is present and negotiated, formally or informally, in every organization

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Organizations have power

- Power of board + staff + members/clients
- Power of reputation, role in communities
- Power of resources: equipment, expertise, meeting space
- Power to mobilize, speak to the media, organize events and focus

What else?

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How to our organizations acknowledge our power?

- In mission and vision statements?
- In our job description?
- In training?
- Through the activities s of our directors and board of directors?

What if power rest in a few people, and these people leave our organization...

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Talking about power in our organizations

- How has an individual in your organization used their power, on behalf of the organization?
- How have people used the power of your organization, without organizational sanction?
- How has your organization used power as a whole organization?

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There are many barriers to mobilizing the power of our organization for systemic change

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From the Individual to the Systemic

- One way we can marshal the power of our organization is by setting up systems to connect individual and systemic advocacy

How do we link our work with individuals to noticing patterns of problems, to devising strategies to change the systems creating these patterns, and harnessing our power as organizations to change these systems?

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Helping the Cause: doing our part to make change happen

- Efforts to change laws and policies that affect our clients, members and communities often take a lot of little steps
- People are needed for phone calls, letter-writing and numbers count!
- We can do our part to use existing structures in our organizations to help get these numbers...

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Showing how we do it...

Create a bulletin board for articles on mobilization events, photos of clients/members at events, reminders of victories...

Ask people to step out of a support group or staff meeting to make a call on an action alert – have them report how it went, and post a notice about the outcome of the vote...

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ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCACY

- **501 c 3s (non-profits) can do more than we think:**

“Fear of an IRS audit, no matter how unlikely, has deprived many non-profits of their voice and has hurt the very constituencies that they intend to serve.”

Jeffrey Berry, Tufts University, Washington post
11/30/03

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Understanding Regulations on Non-Profit Advocacy

There are no federal limitations on tax-exempt non-profits (501 c3 status) doing advocacy (in a general sense)

There are, however, regulations about 501 c3 organizations concerning:

- Lobbying
- Elections and candidates

There are also resources for understanding these regulations

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Most of our organizations can do more than we think we can...and there is a lot of info available to help us learn what we can do

Resources:

The Alliance for Justice: 202.822.6070

<http://www.allianceforjustice.org/nonprofits/index.html>

Charity Lobbying the Public Interest: www.cipi.org

The SPIN Project: www.spinproject.org

Loud and Clear in an Election Year

Donors Forum of Chicago:

http://www.donorsforum.org/policy/np_lobby.html

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What is Lobbying?

- Direct Lobbying:
 - When you state your position on specific legislation to legislators or other government employees who participate in the formulation of legislation or urge your members to do so.
- Grassroots Lobbying:
 - When you state your position to the general public and ask them to contact legislators (reaching beyond your membership...)

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IRS options on non-profit lobbying

- 1) "no substantial portion of the organization's activities can be lobbying"

This is probably sufficient for most organizations that do not have staff devoted to legislative mobilization, but the imprecision makes folks nervous...

- 2) Organizations can file the 1 page Form 5768 to elect the "1976 lobby law" option

This election allows you to spend 20% of the first \$500,000 of your annual expenditures on direct lobbying 15% of the next \$500,00, and so on, up to \$1 million a year. And you may only spend 25% of what you spend on direct lobbying on **grassroots** lobbying.

Therefore, if you have \$100,000 in permissible lobbying expenses a year, you can do \$75,000 direct and \$25,000 grassroots

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What seems like lobbying but isn't

"The State Assembly is considering a bill to make gun ownership illegal. This outrageous legislation would violate your constitutional rights and the rights of other law-abiding citizens. If this legislation is passed, you and your family will be criminals if you want to exercise your right to protect yourself"

WHY???

No CALL TO ACTION

(thanks to the Alliance for Justice for this example)

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Election Years and Candidates

The basic rule is that *non-profits can not endorse candidates*

However, we can engage in a lot of election-year activities as long as they do not endorse or contribute funds to a candidate and do not favor one party, candidate or group of candidates over another

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Non-profits can

- Register voters
- Sponsor candidates forums and debates
- Educate candidates on issues
- Issue legislative scorecards and report cards
- Educate and train the public and media through voter guides, surveys and polls
- Obtain candidate position statements on questionnaires
- Sponsor and campaign on ballot initiative

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Non-profits can't

- Ask a candidate to endorse our platform – *if they endorse it, we are considered to be endorsing them...*but you can ask for *their* platform or position on our issues
- Endorse or oppose a candidate of political party
- Contribute money to a candidate or political party
- Display any bias for or against a candidate or political party
- Question an individual about his or her candidate or political party preference during voter registration

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Greater Investment in Advocacy, Community Organizing, and Mobilization is a behavior change

- Organizations are made up of individuals
- Individuals change behavior through stages of change
- We can apply the stages of change, and communication practices that use an understanding of these changes, to bring about personal and organizational change

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Precontemplation

Not thinking about change

May be resigned

Feeling of no control

Denial: does not believe it applies to self

Believes consequences are not serious

Contemplation

Weighing benefits and costs of behavior, proposed changes

Preparation

Experimenting with small changes

Action

Taking a definitive action to change

Maintenance

Maintaining new behavior over time

Relapse

Experiencing normal part of process of change

Usually feels demoralized

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Who in your organization makes decisions about advocacy and mobilization?

- Executive Director?
- Board?
 - Whole Board
 - Committee
 - Key members
- Staff?
- No one, in an official or formal sense...?

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Precontemplation

Not thinking about changes

May be resigned

Feeling of no control

Denial: does not believe it applies to self

Believes consequences are not serious

How can this apply to an Executive Director or Board regarding advocacy and mobilization?

What techniques can we use to help people in this stage?

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Contemplation and Preparation

Contemplation Weighing benefits and costs of behavior or proposed change

Preparation Experimenting with small changes:

Can we send some people to check out a coalition meeting?

Does the Board have information on non-profit lobbying options?

Can we bring in a speaker from a local effort that affects our clients?

Who is the best messenger for information? Internal or external voices?

Motivational interviewing:

Develop discrepancies

Amplify ambivalence

Explore contradictions

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Teaching people the difference between Problems and Issues

- A **Problem** is something that is wrong:
People are getting HIV because of sharing needles
- An **issue** is a solution to a problem:
Needle exchange makes it possible for people to access clean syringes so they don't have to share. It can stop the spread of HIV.

We change the world by working on issues, not problems

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Thinking like ORGANIZERS

Organizers use everything around them as resources for building power

To build power, we need short, medium and long term goals –what do we want in a month, a year, a decade

Thinking with TWO HEADS is better than ONE

First Head: Outward Goals

Second Head: Internal Goals

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How do we want to work on issues? Choosing a campaign...

- Thinking of your two heads – how will you/your folks/your organization build strength by working on this issue
- A **campaign** is an approach to building power on an issue
- Does the campaign feed both your heads?

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Degrees of Separation in Issues and Campaigns

- What are the pros and cons of choosing these different levels of issues/campaigns:
- **CORE:** addresses the mission of your organization:
More funding for Harm Reduction in NYC
- **PERIPHERY:** issues that affect your members/clients that are not your core mission:
Leases for SRO residents
- **CONTEXT:** this will never fit in your “day job” but affects our world: AIDS Treatment Access in Poor Countries/Military Issues/Tax Cuts

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Choosing a degree of separation

CORE	PERIPHERY	CONTEXT
PRO		
CON		

Remember: use both of your heads to determine pros & cons!

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Examples of next steps in increasing advocacy moments in our work... unofficially

- Distributing action alerts from national AIDS organizations to staff
- Bringing a cell phone to a support group so people can call elected officials as requested in the action alert
- Forming an affinity group of like-minded people across 4 organizations to have lunch once a month

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Acting like LEADERS

- How can I use my skills and qualities (more on this later) to shape and contribute to strategies to BUILD POWER
- How can I be accountable and responsible to my peers, despite the challenges of the rest of the world?
- If I can't do what I said I would do, who can I tell?

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Action Phase

Taking a definitive action to change

Group joins coalition , and tasks out staff

Clients are invited to come to a hearing

Advocacy becomes an agenda item at case conference, to identify systemic problems and establish mechanisms to change

Motivational interviewing:

Support but don't push

Validate/reward any small change...

Prepare for set-backs...

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ACTION: getting involved how?

- Organizational/Personal Inventory

watcha got...

what do you want to get?

are you offering yourself as an organize or leader?

Interviewing Campaign:

what tools will they give (action alerts, training, reportbacks)

what do they want from you?

how long will this go on? (short term = less commitment, quicker gratification; longer term = greater change to develop leaders)

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TACTICS!

- Meeting our folks where they're at, in the service of confronting our targets where they are not!
- “tactics should be within the experience of our members/allies/constituencies, and outside of the experience of our targets”

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TACTICS!

- Phone calls
- “trips” and actions – in town and out of town
- Civil disobedience –explain it no matter what because everyone's wondering
- Letter writing
- Door knocking, outreach, etc.

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TACTICS!

- Boards, Advisory Committees, Community planning
- Meetings take pre-meetings, research, planning and POWER to be effective
- Actions take TEACH INS to be participatory
- Realize possible need for staff support for community representative to be effective.
- Ask people to test-drive a tactic at first, and report back in person!

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Maintenance

Maintaining new behavior over time

How would we know when we've reached this stage?

Examples:

Every staff person has an understanding of their roles in advocacy

Advocacy would survive even if 1 or 2 key people leave...

Organization has mobilization plan and strength to resist threats to funding, or pressure for taking strong positions.

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Building Power for Big Challenges...

- Scope of work can allow you to build up preparation for “close to home” issues
- *Example: for two years, clients, staff and community mobilize support for increased federal funding for services.*
- *They establish strong relationships and work practices*
- *Next, they form a coalition to take on a long-standing local issue and feel that they will not be penalized in local contracts...they have proven mobilization capacity, press savvy, etc...*

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RELAPSE

Relapse

Experiencing normal part of process of change
Usually feels demoralized

Organizationally –

Director of Board gets cold feet, pulls out of coalition

Staff is muzzled for speaking out

Motivational interviewing: Emphasize success, positive reinforcement
(track benefits to organization from this work?)

Personally:

- *When the cynicism becomes overwhelming, or there's a real life overload*
- *Focus on leadership development lets us take a break when we need to (?)*
- *Movements have life cycles – sometimes there is nothing we can do*
- *IT'S OK – take a break, change gears, change degrees of separation*

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Review

- Building power is a process of change
–change is hard!
- We are working to change individuals, organizations and systems
- We can find roles for ourselves that fit our resources, our values and our time constraints.
- Any positive change is good

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