
CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP

Working Well Together: Keeping People Engaged in Your Campaign Group

Many campaigns begin with lots of members and lots of energy, and then suddenly or slowly, people stop coming and the group gets smaller. This sheet is an introduction to why this can happen, and how to prevent it, or increase how involved people are. This involvement is sometimes called 'engagement'.

Why do people stop coming?

Many groups of really experienced campaigners see their groups getting smaller over time, which can make them concerned that people do not care about the issue any more or do not want to be involved.

Understanding why people stop coming first means understanding why people came in the first place! Return to the 'Working Well Together: Motivation' list, and find out what made people interested in the group in the first place. Do you think you are meeting these needs? If not, does the activity suggest ways you could do so?

From CitizensHandbook.org:

People join community groups to meet people, to have fun, to learn new skills, to pursue an interest, and to link their lives to some higher purpose. They leave if they don't find what they are looking for. Citizens groups need to ask themselves more often: What benefits do we provide? At what cost to members? How can we increase the benefits and decrease the costs? Here are some ideas on where to begin.

Stay in touch with one another.

Regular contact is vital. Face to face is best. If you have to meet, getting together in someone's house can be better than meeting in a hall. And getting together over a pot-luck dinner is even better.

Reiterate the purpose of working together

People are primarily motivated by purpose. They need to be reminded of how their involvement is contributing to a worthwhile purpose. In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink shows that purpose is a more powerful motivator than cash.

Welcome likable, energetic newcomers

Introduce them to members of your group. Consider appointing greeters for large meetings and events. Call new contacts to invite them to events, or to pass on information.

Help people find a place in the organization.

The most appealing approach is to say, "Tell us the things you like to do and do well and we will find a way to use those talents." The next most appealing is to say: "Here are the jobs we have, but how you get them done is up to you."

Invite newcomers to assume leadership roles. If the same people run everything, newcomers feel excluded.

Pay attention to group process

Most volunteer groups do not give adequate attention to how they work together. Decision-making methods are not determined explicitly nor are roles, or healthy behaviours. One way to make group process and inter-personal relationships a topic of discussion is to appoint a process watcher.

Discuss the group contract

Set aside occasions when members describe what they expect of the group, and what the group can expect of them in terms of time and responsibilities. This should be recorded and become part of the each member's information.

Act more, meet less

The great majority of people detest meetings; too many are the Black Death of community groups. By comparison, activities like tree-planting draw large numbers of people of all ages.

Keep time demands modest

Most people lead busy lives. Don't ask them to come to meetings if they don't need to be there. Keep expanding the number of active members to ensure everyone does a little, and no one does too much. Work out realistic time commitments for projects.

Do it in twos

Following a practice from Holland, consider working in pairs. It improves the quality of communication, makes work less lonely, and ensures tasks get done. Ethnically mixed pairs (such as English and Chinese) can maintain links to different cultures. Gender mixed pairs can take advantage of different ways men and women relate to one another.

Provide social time and activities

Endless work drives people away. Schedule social time at the beginning and end of meetings. Turn routine tasks into social events; for example, stuff envelopes while sharing pizza. Some groups form a social committee to plan parties, dinners, and trips.

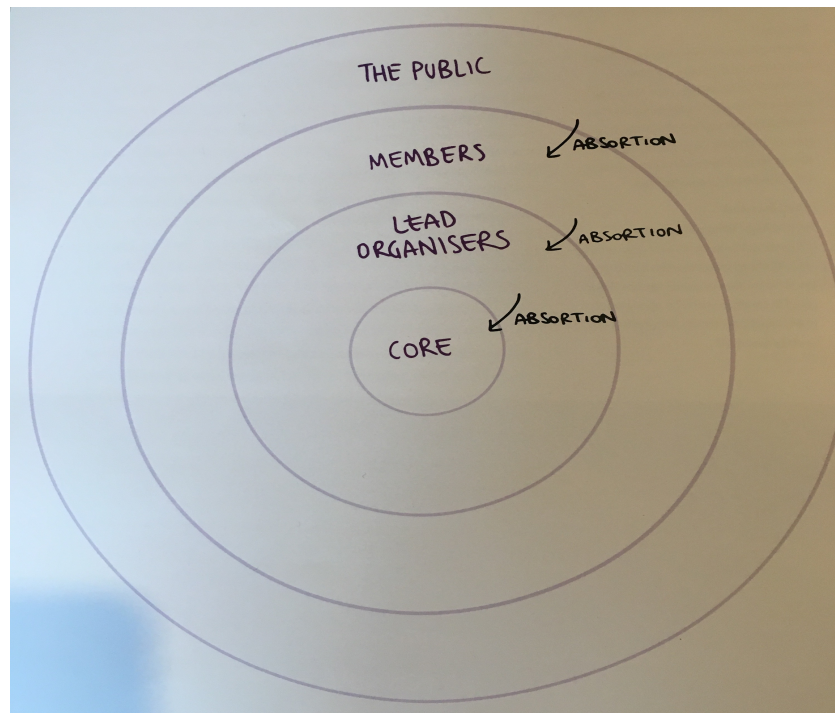
Provide skills training

Many people step out of private life in order to learn something. Providing training, or weaving training into acting, is one of the best ways to get and keep people.

From http://www.citizenshandbook.org/1_07_keepeople.html

From NEON (the New Economy Organisers Network):

NEON calls this idea of bringing people 'closer in', 'Absorption'. They explain that



NEON's Four Top Ways to keep your group members engaged:

1. Role allocation

A defined role on an action or holding something in a group will give people a sense of place and commitment. Stream of useful actions to undertake

Essentially a clear set of things to do, list out all the possible tasks that might be required, so as to allow for more people to get involved.

2. 1-1s and coaching

A more labour intense way of 'agitating' and coaching people into key roles into the movement

3. Whatsapp/messenger

It's essential you don't over-rely on this - it is likely to lead to passive interactions not active organising ones if not used in tandem with the above but is the lowest barrier of entry for others and for yourself

4. Training

Offering mass or more targeted trainings which give people your campaign group's strategy and values will give them the tools they need to give greater commitment to your movement. E.g. Unite Community offers training for community activists before they can become a key organiser.

A top tip from NEON: "You want to give people bigger and more meaningful action as quickly as manageably possible."