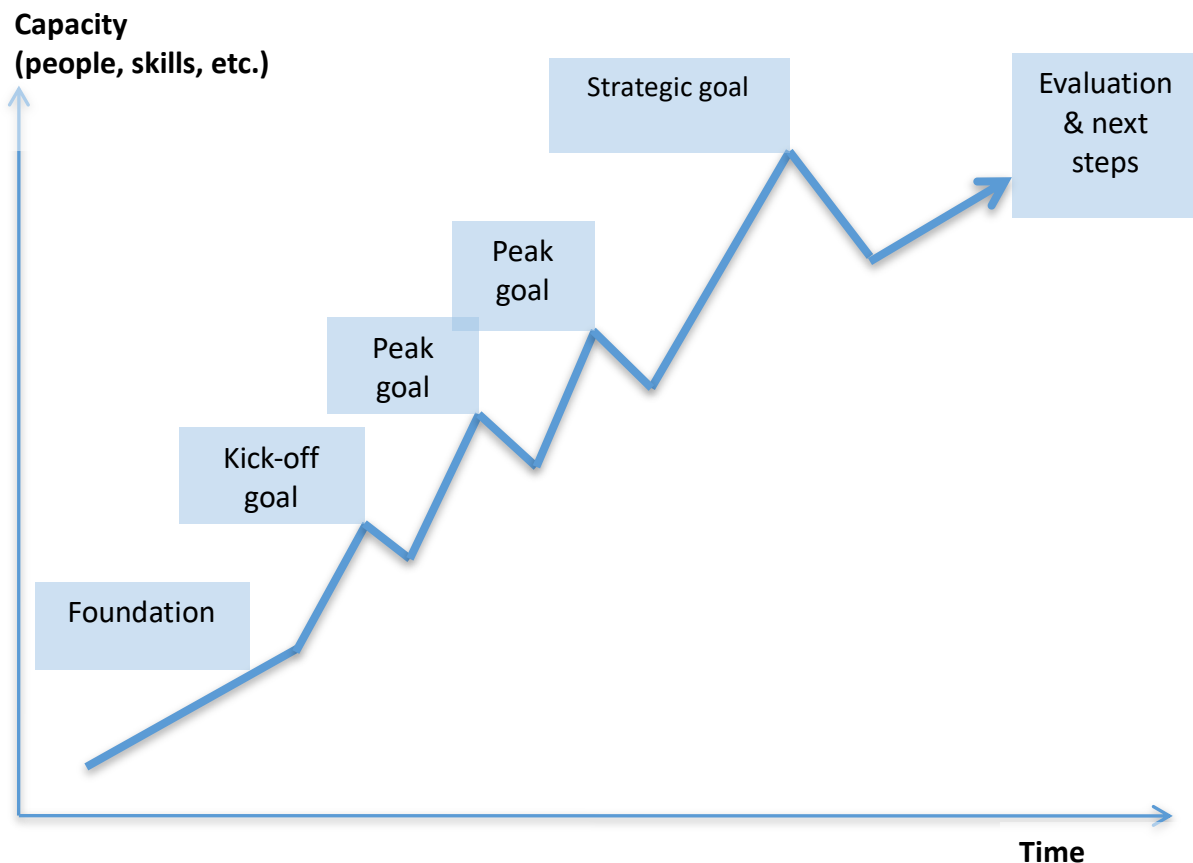


Chart #10



Why are Campaigns Strategic and Motivational?

A campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize action. It is strategic because it is a way to create the capacity we will need to win, building it as our campaign unfolds. Each campaign peak lifts us to another level of capacity; moving from recruiting volunteers, for example, to putting those volunteers to work, recruiting supporters. It is motivational because it enacts an unfolding story of the hope that we can achieve our objective. As it progresses, we find we can make a difference. Our work acquires the urgency of genuine deadlines. The solidarity of collaborating with others in a common cause energizes us. A campaign allows us to turn our dissatisfaction (anger) to constructive purpose.

Campaigns facilitate targeting resources and energy on specific objectives, one at a time. Creating something new requires intense energy and concentration - unlike the inertia that keeps things going once they have begun. Campaigns are crucibles out of which new organizations, programs, or practices can emerge. Campaigns allow us to maximize the value of our time - our most limited resource. We can invest energy and commitment for a limited number of days, weeks or months at levels we cannot - and should not - sustain for long periods of time. As a campaign ends, we consolidate our “wins” or our “losses,” we return to “normal life,” we regroup, and perhaps we undertake another campaign in the future. The “adventurous” quality of a campaign facilitates the development of relationships more quickly - and with greater intensity - than would ordinarily be the case. We more easily come to share a common “story” that we all take part in authoring

The timing of a campaign is structured as an unfolding narrative or story. It begins with a foundation period (prologue), starts crisply with a kick-off (curtain goes up), builds slowly to successive peaks (act one, act two), culminates in a final peak determining the outcome (denouement), and is resolved as we celebrate the outcome (epilogue). Our efforts generate momentum not mysteriously, but as a snowball. As we accomplish each objective we generate new resources that can be applied to achieve the subsequent greater objective. Our motivation grows as each small success persuades us that the subsequent success is achievable - and our commitment grows. The unfolding story of our campaign makes the unfolding story of our organization more credible and, thus, more achievable. Timing has to be carefully managed because a campaign can peak too quickly, exhausting everyone, and then fall into decline. Another danger is a campaign may “heat up” faster in some areas than in others - as some people burn out and others never get going. What role did timing play with DSNI? Why was Gandhi’s “salt march” a particularly good example of timing?

A campaign links relational, story, strategy, and action tactics as each lays groundwork for the next. We may begin the campaign with 5 organizers, each of whom uses house meetings to recruit 15 precinct leaders (75 people), each of whom goes door to door to recruit 5 volunteers for the phone bank (375 people), each of whom contacts and commits 25 voters (9375 people). Along the way, leadership develops, signs go up, people are talked with, rallies are held, and so forth. Using the 1988 California campaign plan, we turned 300 organizers into 11,000 precinct leaders into 100,000 house signs into 25,000 Election Day volunteers into 750,000 additional voters. Although it was not enough to elect our candidate President, we created a new wave of grass roots leadership for political efforts throughout the state for the next several years.

Campaigns provide an opportunity for learning by allowing for “small losses” in the early days of a campaign. As Sitkin argues, creating the space for “small losses” early on in a project

offer participants the opportunity to try new things, which is essential to learning how to do them.⁹ And it affords the organization as a whole a chance to learn how to “get it right.” In most campaigns, we know that we will have to change the first “rap” that we write, once the “rubber hits the road” and we begin to use it. It is important to use the early phase of a campaign “mindfully” in this way so it isn’t just a preview of what we will do wrong on a large scale.

As is the case with strategy, campaigns are nested. Each campaign objective can be viewed as a “mini-campaign” with its own prologue, kick-off, peaks, climax, and epilogue. The campaign also “chunks out” into distinct territories, districts, or other responsibilities for which specific individuals are responsible. A good campaign can be thought of as a symphony of multiple movements, each with an exposition, development, and recapitulation; but which together proceed toward a grand finale. A symphony is also constructed from the interplay of many different voices interacting in multiple ways but whose overall coordination is crucial for the success of the undertaking. If this seems an overly structured metaphor, you may prefer a jazz ensemble.

What Are the Phases of a Campaign?

A campaign strategically integrates relational, motivation, strategic and action tactics - as well as leadership development - in each of five phases: a foundation, kick-off, peaks, the peak, and resolution. Use Campaign Chart #10 to look for similar dynamics in the cases we read about or in your own project.

Foundation

During the foundation period, the goal is to create the capacity (the “power to”) with which to launch a campaign. A foundation period may last a few days, weeks, months or years - depending on the scope of the undertaking and the extent to which you start “from scratch.” The foundation for the farm workers’ boycott campaign, for example, was built over a period of three years. During a foundation period, *relational* tactics are emphasized and typically include one-on-one meetings, house meetings, and meetings of small groups of supporters. *Interpretive* tactics include deliberation to clarify interests, identifying problems, thinking through how to turn problems into issues, researching the terrain, and designing a plan - as well as first formulating the story of the campaign. What kinds of *action* tactics are most useful for this period? (Remember, you want to build as broad a base as possible while not letting things heat up too quickly). This is the time to nail down resources, conduct a census, handle small issues (claims), deal with individual cases (collaboration), and so forth. This is a crucial period for leadership development. Initial leaders are identified and may be brought together in an “ad hoc”

⁹ Sim Sitkin, (1992), “Learning Through Failure: The Strategy of Small Losses”, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol.14, (pp. 231-266).

organizing, sponsoring, or campaign committee - a provisional leadership group with whom you can work to develop the initial stages of the campaign.

Kick-Off

The kick-off is the moment at which the campaign officially begins. A campaign doesn't creep into existence, without anyone noticing... or it will fade away the same way. Setting a date for a kick-off creates the urgent focused concentration and commitment it takes to get things going. It is a deadline for initial recruiting, planning, and preparation of materials. Typically a kick-off takes the form of a big meeting or rally for which everyone with an initial interest is mobilized (*relational*). Leadership can be recognized there, the campaign story told, the plan ratified, and the program adopted (*interpretive*). In terms of *action*, sign-ups can be gathered, and commitments can be made to hold a meeting, make phone calls or pass out leaflets - and so forth. A kick-off is also a deadline for the formal delegation of leadership authority to those who will be responsible for carrying out the campaign. Short campaigns have a single kick-off. During the three years of the Grape Boycott, we had another kick-off each spring.

Peaks

The campaign proceeds toward reaching a series of peaks, each one building on what has gone before. By crossing the threshold of each peak, we are able to make the last burst of effort needed to break through to a higher level of capacity. In the example in the reader, we set an objective for organizer recruitment, precinct leader recruitment, voter identification, house sign distribution, Election Day organization, and total voter turnout. In the marches you read about, what were the peaks? What were the peaks of the Montgomery bus boycott? Were there peaks in the DSNi campaign? As the program unfolds, *relational* tactics that contribute to the peaks include recruiting, training, committee expansion, periodic "big meetings," etc. In the Pelosi campaign, we had a weekly Saturday AM rally at which new precinct leaders were recognized, voter contact results announced, and special training conducted. As to *interpretation*, peaks focus on development of issues and interpretation of actions and reactions. Increasingly, *action* tactics become the focus of attention as services are expanded, key events take place, or the conflict escalates. Leadership development continues as more responsibilities can be delegated, training continues, and more people are brought into the planning. The art of leading a campaign through this phase is in finding ever-new ways to broaden support, sharpen the issues, and renew commitment. It is also in devising peaks that are inspirational, yet achievable - and recovering from peaks not achieved.

The Peak

The campaign “peak” should come at the moment of maximum mobilization - even though it doesn’t always work out this way. I once ran a campaign that “peaked” at the kick-off. The leadership fell apart, losing the capacity to follow through on an exemplary mobilization. In some cases, the timing of the peak is predictable as in an election campaign. In other cases, those who lead the campaign can designate the peak. Chavez’s march to Sacramento, or his 28 day fast, Gandhi’s salt march, and the Selma to Montgomery march had “natural” peaks at their conclusion - which created a kind of “crisis” of expectation on everyone’s part. The resources mobilized to reach this peak - even though not directly targeted on the opposition - generated so much capacity that it caused the opposition to respond. In the farm worker’s boycott target, Schenley Industries was so fearful that the march would focus on them when it reached Sacramento that they signed with the union five days before it arrived. This victory turned the end of the march into a real peak as 10,000 people showed up ready to go right into the next boycott. Other times, the “peak” emerges from the actions and reactions of all those playing a role in the campaign. As the first few grape growers signed contracts, it created a powerful momentum - which we worked at heating up - and which continued to grow until the entire industry signed three months later. *Relational* tactics include mass meetings, rallies, marches, etc. *Interpretive* work is critical in bringing a campaign to a successful peak - deliberating about appropriate moves and interpreting events in the most persuasive way possible. The peak is the *action* program.

Resolution

Campaigns are either won or lost. Their effectiveness comes from the fact that they are commitments to achieve a clear, measurable, accountable outcome. Winning is not only a matter of claims making. If you are doing collaborative work, winning can mean establishing a new charter school by a certain date, enrolling a certain number of students in your program, or successfully completing a three-month program (with specific objectives). Only by risking failure do we make the kind of commitments that make success possible. This is how we can hold ourselves accountable to those with whom we make a contract. Resolving a campaign, however, means learning how to be successful at “winning” or at “losing.” To succeed at winning you must realize when you have won. Alinsky says that organizers have to be well-integrated schizoids who know how to polarize to mobilize, but depolarize to settle. In the heat of a campaign, it’s very easy to confuse the “purity” of one’s position with the interests of one’s constituency. When the grape growers were finally ready to sign with the union, we had to compromise on issues that had been very important to us, but would have prolonged the battle much more. It took serious interpretive work to realize that even though we hadn’t won

everything, we had won. On the other hand, it is important to know how to lose. Never pretend a loss is really a win - as in "well we didn't really win the election, but that doesn't really matter because it wasn't really important anyway." No one believes it, and it robs the commitment we put into the effort of its value. We need to acknowledge a loss as a loss, but put it into context, interpret what happened, accept responsibility, recognize those who contributed - and prepare for what comes next. Win or lose, a campaign should always conclude with evaluation, celebration, and preparation. When we win, we are sometimes so interested in celebrating we forget to learn why we won, what we did right and what we did wrong, and recognize those who contributed. When we lose, even when we do evaluate, we may not celebrate the hard work, the commitment, the willingness to take risk and all that was achieved. The important thing about campaigns is there is a "next time" - and it is important to prepare for it. Or, as many a Red Sox fan has been heard to remark, "Just wait 'til next season!"

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QUESTIONS

1. Draw a map of your project that places your constituency at the center. How would you draw your leadership? An opposition? Supporters? Others?
2. What challenges to the values or interests of your constituency do you hope to address? Why might they want to organize? How do you know? What outcomes might they achieve if they organize?
3. What is your theory of change? Why do you need to organize power to achieve your goals? Where can your constituency get the power they need to achieve these outcomes? Power with or power over? How will they turn the resources they have into the power they need?
 1. What are the INTERESTS of your constituency?
 2. Who has the RESOURCES needed to address these INTERESTS?