

Preparing for a Change Campaign

Below are steps that are usually essential to prepare for a successful change campaign. You may need to change the order, or perform several steps simultaneously, depending on your campaign.

1. Build a personal support base

Establish support that won't disappear or collapse if you are attacked politically.

- Household — Have a secure place to live and a steady source of other necessities (healthy food, water, clean air, warmth, exercise, love, etc.)
- Financial — Have money in the bank and/or a secure job.
- Emotional — Have at least one person you can count on to support you emotionally — often a parent, sibling, spouse, or romantic partner. Be sure these people can support you when you are in very bad emotional shape. Try to build a wide network of support so that no single person will burn out if you need a lot of support and they won't be stretched thin if you and all your fellow activists are simultaneously needy.

2. Assemble a core activist group and build your skills

- Assemble at least two or three activists who are knowledgeable, experienced, and skilled in progressive change theory and methods.
- Together, build up the requisite skills for your anticipated campaign. Especially, make sure you have basic education, organizing, and personal counseling skills. You may also need other skills like fundraising, researching, publishing, public speaking, negotiating, lobbying, demonstrating, etc.
- Work together for a while to make sure that you are personally compatible and can work through internal conflicts.

3. Choose an appropriate constituency

- Find a primary constituency that your activist core group can work with — preferably a group with which you share important attributes such as a common oppression, age, culture, ethnicity, religion, class, values, etc. Choose people you understand and like.
- Choose a constituency that has some resources they can bring to the campaign: experience, skills, dedication, money, etc. It is likely you will be struggling with powerful forces — you will probably need all the resources you can get to muster enough counter-force.
- Choose a constituency that is concerned about the issue you have chosen and could be energized to work for change.

4. Choose a “hot” change issue

- Choose an issue that has an obvious wrong that clearly can and should be righted.
- Choose an issue with one or more reasonable alternative solutions that could be implemented.
- Choose an issue that is timely.
- Choose an issue that can energize your chosen constituency to action.

5. Identify societal myths

Identify the common assumptions or “societal myths” that hide the truth and anchor the status quo. Also, identify the truths that contradict these myths and, if widely known, would compel change.

6. Choose the campaign target — people and goals

Identify who could right the wrongs or implement the alternatives. Who are they? What would they need to do to end the wrongs and implement the alternatives? Decide who you want to target and what you want them to do.

7. Design the campaign

A good campaign energizes your constituency to action, spotlights your issue and makes it visible to a large number of people, dispels societal myths, illuminates the truth, demonstrates your alternative solutions, and demands that the target people end the wrongs and implement the alternatives. If you are wealthy and unconcerned about democracy, your campaign might consist entirely of hiring consultants to prepare slick reports, advertising massively to sway the public, hiring lobbyists to influence government or corporate officials, and contributing heavily to political campaigns. If you are not wealthy and you strive for democratic change, your campaign is more likely to rely on truthful, balanced research, massive grassroots education and organization building, and volunteer lobbying. It may also include lawsuits or nonviolent struggle.

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