

# Tips on Base Building: there are no short cuts!

Developed by Greg Akili

## 1. Why have an identifiable base?

- 1.1 People make a difference if you go to them; it is not enough to have a good idea or a good issue.
- 1.2 An organization must have a base of people that can be counted on to achieve the goals.
- 1.3 More can be accomplished with people who feel part of an organized group.
- 1.4 The level of comfort is increased and people will participate and be involved in public actions when there is an identifiable base.

## 2. Why should people get involved? What do they get for it?

- 2.1 People get involved based on their personal interest or because of a crisis.
- 2.2 America does not encourage involvement. Many people believe that their vote or voice will not count.
- 2.3 Many people in America are made to feel powerless, especially people of color and women because of racism, white supremacy and sexism.
- 2.4 The people are not to blame. They are not obligated to participate or work on an issue.

## 3. Appreciate the total, don't just focus on the core.

- 3.1 Too often people complain because there are not more people involved. The outer circle of support is dismissed because involvement is measured by how many people come to the monthly meeting.

### A. Level of supporters

1. Core supporters of (5-7) key volunteers can always be counted on.
2. Active supporters (20-25) will support most of the activities and will attend some meetings.
3. General supporters (50-70) will do one thing, one time, rarely come to meetings.
4. The public.

- 3.2 The key is working to get each level of supporter to move to the core by asking more from people at each level and showing appreciation for the core while displaying gratitude at each level.

## 6. **The Science of Numbers**

- 6.1 The essence of base building is numbers and volume.

- A. In order to get 50 people to show up when the issue is not hot, 150-200 names are needed.
- B. If the names are cold and the people are not familiar with the group or issue, more names will be needed.
- C. Thirty percent or more of the people called will not be at home; 15-20% of the numbers will not be good numbers; 25-30% will be no's; 25-30% will say yes. Of those who say yes, only a small percent will actually show.
- D. Out of the 20 people talked to, 9 will say yes and 3-4 will show.

## 7. **Methods for Mobilizing**

7.1 House meeting: A key volunteer/staff/supporter visits new people and gives them the rap, asks them to invite 8-10 of their friends over so key volunteers can talk with them to get them involved.

A. The host is asked to make up a list and call their friends right then. This approach is the hardest and takes the most time, but offers the best results. Time is spent with the individual and a relationship is developed. Keys:

1. Strong rap; tracking system
2. Getting the person to make a list and call their friends
3. Consistent follow-up calling, regular check-ins and reinforcement
4. Getting the host to call their friends the day of the house meeting

B. Phone banks recruitment: 4-5 phoners calling at least 4 nights a week. Keys:

1. Strong rap and tally
2. Dedicated phoning for at least 2-1/2 hours a night
3. Large pool of names to call, at least 3 times the number of names for the number of people expected to turn out
4. Volunteer phone bank to recruit phoners to staff the phone banks

## 4. The need to build and rebuild

4.1 Every 3-4 months there will be a need to rebuild with a new group of people. People will move on to another level involved in something else or become inactive.

4.2 Develop ways to assist people to move from level to level. Core supporters need to work with new people; conduct orientation, plan parties for new supporters

## 5. The importance of knowing what to say, tracking, follow-up and accountability. Raps, tallies, reminder calls and no-show call. Supporters will be successful:

5.1 The rap is like a map. All rap/scripts should have the same elements.

- A. Introduction: who you are and identify the group
- B. Statement of conditions and the need to take immediate action
- C. There is hope because people can make a difference and we need people's help because we can't do it alone.
- D. What you can do: Come to the meeting....
- E. Get a commitment: Will you join us, yes or no; maybes cannot be counted or measured. Tell the person, we are counting on you.

5.2 How to know how many people are expected

A. Tallies:

1. Number of yes's
2. Number of no's
3. Total number of people talked with (add yes's and no's)
4. Total number of attempts

5.3 People will forget; they must be reinforced and reminded often and regularly.

- A. Reminder calls should be made at least three times before the event and twice the day of the event.

5.4 No-show calls

- A. If people say yes and they do not show, they must be called to find out why.
- B. If the person keeps saying yes but never shows, they should be written off.

### Agenda for Volunteer Orientation

**1. Introductions**

**2. What we are doing and why it is important**

- Each of you is important and valuable and we thank you.
- We want you to feel **comfortable, capable and confident**.
- We are going door-to-door and telling people about (Our action...)
- Asking the people in this neighborhood to get involved and to join us.
- Because we know that when people like you get involved and take action, that is how we improve our community.

**3. Don't's and Do's**

DON'T'S

- Don't be judgmental and make assumptions.
- Don't argue with people and preach to them.
- Don't spend too much time with one person.

DO'S

- Do smile and sound urgent.
- Do look people in the eyes, make eye contact.
- Do be polite.

**4. Review what to say, the "Rap," and what is in the packet.**

- Read rap aloud; ask people to read with you.
- Introduction
- Statement of conditions
- Get an agreement.
- Believe that people want to get involved and take action.
- Get a commitment, **will you join us? (then PAUSE)** yes or no.

**5. Role play**

- Divide into pairs, each person take turns demonstrating the rap

**6. Wrap-up**

- Volunteers return and fill out tally sheet.
- Review what happen, what were the comments the low's and high points
- Ask everyone to come back for the next action.