

Dealing with the Opposition

**"It is wise in war not to
underrate your opponent.
It is equally important to
understand his methods,
and how his mind works.
Such understanding is the
necessary foundation of a
successful effort to
foresee and forestall
his moves."**

LIDDELL HART,
THOUGHTS ON WAR, 1944

Almost without fail, if you are on the right track, someone will object to your mission or your strategy. Opponents may press for an alternative, fight to keep the status quo, or even try to destroy your group. Hence, you become targets of *counter advocacy*, which may take the form of gentle persuasion, education, benign neglect, misunderstanding or even outright harassment. This chapter will help you deal with the road-blocks that your opponents attempt to place in your path.

In some cases, resistance may come from community leaders and decision-makers. Calls for reform can be sensitive subjects for them, because such demands can suggest that problems occurred on their watch. In other cases, people will resent what you are doing because they are, in fact, targets—and their resentment means that you are having an impact.

In any case, don't cringe at criticism. It's a key feature of this playing field. Listen to it, respond to relevant points, and strive to keep it from interfering with your objective. If you have proceeded responsibly, taking enough time to analyze the issue and clarify your objective, you will be sufficiently comfortable in your commitment to withstand criticism.

The opposition has an arsenal of responses, and there are many ways for us to respond to them. For the sake of your campaign, you have to know these counter-advocacy tactics when you see them, and know how to defend against them. It's part of effective advocacy. In this chapter, we present a framework for identifying the types of responses that opposition groups might make. We will also provide suggestions for responding.

Defensive strategies used by the opposition

Although the opposition's response cannot be predicted with certainty, there are some typical patterns have been identified. Lee Staples, in his book *Roots to Power* (1984), categorizes them as "The Seven D's of Defense." We expand that to "Ten D's and an S": *deflect, delay, deny, discount, deceive, divide, dulcify, discredit, destroy, deal* and *surrender*. A target may respond in any or all of these ten ways, perhaps shifting its response midstream, throwing advocates off balance. With advance preparation, advocates can be ready, shifting gears quickly to deal with whatever strategy the opposition chooses. We start with a description of those different opposition strategies. There you will find an analysis of why the opposition uses these strategies, and some guidelines for the techniques you can use to deflect or defuse them. (Some of the examples are taken from the field of environmental advocacy, but are broadly applicable in the field of health.)

1. Deflect

A common and natural response to criticism or attack is to sidestep it, and try to shift the focus of attention. This could mean diverting attention to side issues, or "passing the buck" to some group that has no effective control of the problem. The tactic is designed to turn your energies elsewhere.

Here is an example: your advocacy group demands clean-up of a hazardous waste site. Your opponent's response is to deflect your attention through an in-depth discussion of a general environmental bill caught up in congressional subcommittees. Or they might deflect the debate into one about jobs. Sometimes issues raised by the opposition are valid—for example, it may be true that an environmentally destructive program provides employment. But that does not relieve a corporation of the obligation to follow safe waste-disposal practices, and should not change your priorities.

Typically, "passing the buck" involves shunting the issue to a part of the target organization that has little or no decision-making power, such as the "community relations" department—or even to another organization. The target's objective is to frustrate your attempts to identify the responsible party. Knowing the decision-making process and who holds the power (see Chapter 3) can help you skirt this minefield successfully.

2. Delay

One of the most common responses for a target faced with substantial criticism is to engage in delay techniques. In this case, the opposition wants you to think the

2. Crack the information bank

Having identified relevant sources, the next step is accessing information to determine your issue's key players. U.S. citizens have legal access to vast banks of public documents and data. Some simple techniques can improve your chances of gaining the requested data in a timely fashion. Examples include the use of printed stationery, which makes your request look professional; telephoning, until you can pinpoint the right person for a request; familiarizing yourself with relevant professional jargon; or developing contacts on the inside. Here are some ways to gain insight into the workings of corporations, law firms, individuals and affiliations, elected officials, property owners, lobbyists and government officials.

A. Major corporations

Investigative forays into corporations invariably lead with several basic questions (see Collette: *Research Guide for Leaders*), including:

1. Who owns and controls the company?
2. Who are the officers and directors, and what are their interlocking directorates?
3. What are the money flow and financial relationships between them?
4. What problems has the company experienced?

Annual reports provide the company's view of its history, management, financial condition, plant locations and future plans. Biased though annual reports they may be, there are facts to be gleaned from them. Publicly held corporations must file numerous reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including Form 10-K, Form 8-K, a proxy statement, and Form 13-F. They are prime sources of information about the firm's stock ownership; its directors and executive officers, including their wealth and holdings; money flow; pending legal proceedings; mergers and acquisitions; changes in control or assets; and major institutional stockholders.

There are a variety of directories available in public libraries that describe the directors, officers and interlocking relationships. Examples are Standard and Poor's *Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives* and Dun & Bradstreet's *Middle Market Directory*. Investment guides, such as *Value Line's Investment Survey* and *Moody's Banking and Finance Manual* give you information about stock ownership and control.

Court records from actions where corporations have been plaintiffs or defendants can be a veritable gold mine of information, whether through documents that were admitted as evidence, or from the trial's record of testimony. Other state and

local records, such as tax assessment records, may contain useful information about the firm, its managers, lawyers, allies and enemies.

Still other resources, such as Standard and Poor's *Corporation Records*, provide more detailed descriptions of many companies' production and financial structure.

B. Law firms

Many politicians, lobbyists and decision-makers are lawyers. The Martindale-Hubbell *Law Directory* gives information on all lawyers and most law firms in the country, including biographical data, a partial listing of corporate clients, and often financial worth.

C. Individuals and their affiliations

Who's Who directories for almost every vocation, location and minority present a range of information, including biographical data, corporate involvements, and past political relationships. Research can determine a range of affiliations from both *Who's Who* directories and the *Foundation Directory*. These would indicate ties between corporations; between law firms and corporations; between foundations and the web of banks, corporations, and non-profits.

Court records will state whether a person has ever been arrested, sued or had judgments against him or her, as well as whether the subject has ever had anyone else arrested or sued. Tax records show what real estate a person owns, the assessed value of the property, improvements on the property and delinquent taxes. For more specific guidance, see D. Noyes' *Raising Hell*.

D. Elected officials

"To understand politicians, you need to follow the money" (Noyes, 1983). The ethics statement, also known in some locations as a "statement of economic interests," lists a politician's income from outside sources, such as stock dividends, consulting fees, income from speaking engagements, and sales commissions.

Campaign reporting forms give expense records of campaigns. Voting records are also public information. Common Cause, a public interest advocacy organization, examines such records to see if there are any links between elected officials' major campaign contributors and their voting records.

E. Property owners

Local property and/or tax documents, which are public records on file with local governmental agencies, provide information about property owners.

F. Lobbyists

Major interest groups, including corporations, trade associations, churches, labor organizations and citizens groups, employ people to lobby for them at city hall, the state capital and Congress. Lobbyists must register in most states with the secretary of state.

G. Non-elected government officials

The U.S. Civil Service Commission, the *Federal Yellow Book* and the *National Directory of State Agencies* show how various governmental offices, branches and bureaus are organized. The *Congressional Directory* provides basic background information about the staffs of elected officials.

3. Having identified the power, go straight to it for information

Who but decision-makers can offer as much information about decision-makers? Interviewing them can be very informative. This is often the case even if they're engaged in subterfuge, because when we spot camouflage or denial we can often tap into some of the target's major weaknesses. You will invariably find rewards when you come to such interviews prepared, knowing as much as possible about the individual, his or her organization, and the topic of interest.

As you will find, revealing all that you know will not necessarily help you achieve the goal of gaining more information. Indeed, attempts to dazzle the targets with the extent of your knowledge are likely to put them on the defensive, which may lead to stonewalling, or a series of misleading statements. The best approach is one that will ensure, to the extent possible, the comfort of your subject. To this end, it's useful to open with small talk as you and the subject seek common ground and, hence, a comfort zone. You're not co-opting your principles, but preserving this opportunity to gain potentially vital information—to learn by listening, or to lead the conversation where you want it to go.

issue is being addressed, when in fact nothing is happening. By postponing dialogue or confrontation, the target seeks to diffuse the advocates' momentum, wear the advocates down, and ultimately remove the issue from the public eye. Successful delay can demoralize a group, producing a level of frustration that in extreme cases can cause members to vent anger at each other.

One all too familiar delay strategy is the formation of a "study commission" that has no real power to affect change. Bureaucrats may brush aside abundant data that's available to them, claiming it is insufficient. They may give the appearance of being generous by inviting the group to nominate some of its own members to serve on the commission—but in such cases, valuable time and energy are frequently wasted on committees and busywork. The billboard industry, for example, is notorious for setting up "sign commissions." Padded with industry lobbyists and representatives, these commissions remove the debate from the public eye and delay it to death.

3. Deny

An opponent may deny there is any validity to claims about a problem, or about proposed solutions. It may carry denial to the point of refusing to meet with the group, or by being "unavailable" for dialogue. Implicit here: there is no problem—or if there is a problem, it's too small to worry about.

Clever targets may disguise denial by saying they would *like* to help but, sadly, there isn't enough money in this or the next budget to do so. (There are traces of delay there, as well, implying you may want to come back in two years and try again.) Or they may try a "good-cop-bad-cop" approach: "I see your point, but my hands are tied. I'm only one small voice in this big organization."

One of the most flagrant examples of a denial strategy is the tobacco industry's claims that the evidence linking tobacco and health is controversial. The industry likes to say that there is a "statistical association" between smoking and disease but still denies that there is a causal relationship.

4. Discount

There are two main ways an opponent may discount you: by minimizing the importance of the problem, or by questioning your legitimacy as an agent of change. The target may seem to make token efforts at communicating with the group, while most of its energy is directed to downplaying the crisis. For example, in the case of the Three Mile Island nuclear power-plant disaster, officials minimized the gravity of the radiation leaks and the consequences (as some are doing to this day).

The tobacco industry uses discounting tactics when they question the relationship between smoking and disease.

Another method of discounting is to apply derogatory labels to advocacy groups, dismissing them as alien to the community, insignificant or "extremist" (i.e. radical, fascist, leftist, reactionary, etc.). Or the target may discount a group's claims by challenging its facts and figures (which underlines the importance of basing your campaign on a firm foundation of meticulous research). See also "Discredit" on page 90.

5. Deceive

Deception is conscious manipulation that may take the form of subtle tricks or lies. There are similarities between deceiving and denying, but deceiving is more conscious and intentional. For example, a target may deliberately attempt to mislead advocates into believing meaningful action has been taken or is forthcoming, when that is not the case. There may be feigned sympathy, but no sincere intent to engage in dialogue, to compromise, or even to consider the advocates' position. A deceptive tactic may be strikingly simple—for example, when an opponent with a "hardline" reputation offers angry advocates refreshments as a surprise gesture of good will, thus knocking them off balance.

Here are some examples of deceptive moves:

- A target organization offers to meet with advocates, but makes itself available only at times or places that are inconvenient enough to make such a session extremely unlikely, if not impossible.
- Meetings publicized as negotiations prove to be one-way information sessions. The target organization monopolizes the agenda with long explanations, complete with detailed charts explaining why it cannot meet the advocates' demands. "Dialogue" becomes lecture, and the advocates are rendered passive.
- Targets seek to confuse and intimidate advocates with a flood of jargon and bureaucratic red tape. The advocates begin to drown in legal, organizational, or technical explanations for why change cannot happen.
- Targets may present substitute "solutions" which do nothing to address the problem, but confuse and distract the advocates.
- Target organizations may draw upon bogus or manipulated surveys to derail advocates. For example, the billboard industry has been known to present a discredited public opinion poll to support its position for less restriction on tobacco and alcohol billboard advertising.

6. Divide

By planting dissension, the opposition wants to undercut advocates' unity, sowing enough discord to divide and conquer. One way to divide an advocacy group is to pit more militant against moderate advocates. For example, the opposition may make appeals for "level-headedness," encouraging moderates in the group to criticize more militant members. The opposition may also attempt to win over the more moderate leaders of a group by offering token concessions of small consequence, hoping to induce moderates to declare a victory and drop a cause before *real* concessions are forthcoming.

Targets also have been known to try "buying off" leaders of advocacy groups with offers of personal or professional rewards, such as salaried positions, or hefty financial offers for personal property.

Divide-and-conquer techniques are not directed only at advocate leaders. Targets strive at times to sow dissension between advocacy communities. For example, one technique in the hazardous waste industry is to pit one neighborhood against another. In that scenario, many groups end up battling each other to keep waste sites out of their own back yards.

Another technique is to establish a "front group" to compete for a constituency. While such groups appear to share the goals of an advocacy organization, they actually belong to the opposition.

The opposition may also try dividing residents of communities from advocates by organizing neighborhood "advisory committees." Ostensibly, these committees are set up to monitor complaints about offensive conduct by the target organization, and to give the target "advice" concerning the objectionable action. However, there is no mechanism for questioning the conduct of the target. (When such committees are established prior to the arrival of a hazardous waste site, you can assume that such a facility is indeed going to be built!)

By providing limited resources to alleviate a problem, target organizations can divide advocacy groups into those who want to get at least something out of the dispute, and those who want to hold out for more. A. H. Robins Co., manufacturer of the Dalkon Shield intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD), used this approach. The company provided cash compensation ranging from \$125 to \$725 to plaintiffs seeking legal redress for severe injuries, including infection, sterility and death, in the 1970s and 1980s. Literally hundreds of thousands of women were thought to have been injured by the product; the settlement offer severely split ranks between those prepared to settle, and those demanding more compensation.

**"You have to be very
self-motivated to enjoy
your work—enjoy
engaging in battles."
AN ADVOCATE.**

7. Dulcify

A synonym of *dulcify* is *mollify*, which is to "soothe; pacify; appease." One way to do this is for an organization to dispense jobs, services or other benefits in response to a group's action. Thus, the situation appears agreeable in the short-term. Harsh criticism is warded off, and attention is diverted from long-term negative effects. For instance, a logging company marketing an environmentally unsound plan to a rural community emphasizes job opportunities. The short-term benefit of jobs may appear more concrete than long-term problems, such as diminishing forests and wildlife, an economy built on a rapidly depleting resource, and low wages for those new jobs.

A target organization can also give the appearance of agreement, while conceding little, by falsely assuring advocates that agreement is imminent. There may be attempts, also, to give advocates false expectations by agreeing to the mildest demands.

The line between compromise (which is often desirable) and dulcifying is sometimes vague. Advocates will need to be alert to the opponent's true intent if they are to chart an appropriate course.

8. Discredit

The opposition may spend much of its energy trying to undermine the group's credibility through the media, public hearings or direct persuasion. Discrediting is meant to cast doubt on an advocacy group's motives and methods. For example, the opposition may seek to label advocates as unreasonable, emotional, irresponsible, radical or communist. Advocacy groups may be described as consisting of a few "agitators" who are not representative of the community. The goal is to prejudice the public against a group, and to frighten the advocates themselves into "rational" (i.e., less threatening) action.

In some cases, the effort to discredit a group can be quite demeaning to its members—as when the opposition suggests that the advocates are out of step with society, and need to adjust their own values and attitudes. For example, members of a public housing tenant group may be encouraged to join "control your child" campaigns in response to their demands for adequate building maintenance. The implication is that the tenants, not the landlords, are the problem.

In other cases, the opposition may pack hearings with supporters to heckle and disrupt the proceedings. The point is to unnerve those calling for change, and discourage their potential supporters.

9. Destroy

A target may respond to an action with attempts to eliminate a group, or destabilize it so that it self-destructs. Through legal or economic means, or crude scare tactics, the target may directly attack the advocates' constituents, members, or organizational base. Stakes may be high, with much to be gained and, from the perspective of the target, much to be lost with respect to its vested interests. In some cases, advocates may inadvertently play into the hands of target organizations, giving them an opening through which to deliver the *coup de grace*. For example, advocates making unfounded or malicious accusations risk being sued for slander or libel, with devastating damage suits.

It is not unusual to see target organizations threatening lawsuits—not because they view the courts as a viable response, but to deter advocates from valid criticism. Their aim is to intimidate, causing the advocates to back off. In fact, the risk of being sued is not high. Although an exceptionally well-heeled target organization facing legal sanctions may counter-sue to force an advocacy group onto the defensive, such lawsuits are rare. In the grassroots toxics movement, the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste found the odds of being sued to be about one in two hundred.

However, the *threat* of legal action can be a powerful weapon, and the opposition can gain an advantage without even having to proceed all the way to court. For example, "discovery" procedures preparatory to formal proceedings would entitle the opposition to relevant information about the advocacy group's operations. The advocacy group may be justifiably nervous about opening up important records such as telephone logs, and membership and contributors' lists. In addition, group members may be subject to "depositions" in which they are questioned under oath by counsel for an opponent. So the threat of a lawsuit alone may be a powerful deterrent.

The opposition may also try such tactics as economic sanctions, threats to fire group members, evictions, curtailment of credit or funding sources, or assaults on financial resources through legal battles. Some opponents may not be above obvious scare tactics, such as threatening physical violence or arrest. When a group is organized and knows its rights, however, such threats have little effect.

10. Deal

For a variety of reasons, a target organization may opt for the path of least resistance and offer to make a deal, working with the advocates toward a mutually acceptable solution. Dealing has obvious advantages: collaboration is likely to enhance mutual understanding. As defenses relax, chances for creative solutions improve.

However, some deals can deflect an advocacy group from its purpose without providing much of value in return. Compromising requires sharp attention to the economic, political, and social climate as well as to the dynamic among the players. (See "Know when to negotiate," page 97.) If you are not careful, compromise can be tantamount to victory for the opposition, leaving your advocacy group far short of its goal.

One example is the Comprehensive Smoking Prevention Education Act of 1984, a bill that required four rotating warnings to be printed on cigarette packs. From the point of view of the pro-health forces, this bill was the result of a compromise: to secure its passage, they had to give up their demand for a reference to the addictive nature of smoking, and other more strongly worded warnings. However, compromise at one point in time does not mean that future improvements are out of the question. The issue of health warnings remains on the front burner of health advocates, and the warnings on cigarette packets are likely to be strengthened in the coming years.

11. Surrender

The best-case scenario is for the opposition to agree to an advocate group's demands. If this rare development occurs, it's important to remember, in the euphoria of the moment, that talk is cheap. A victory isn't complete until the opposition has followed through on its concessions or promises. In other words, the advocacy campaign is not over when terms are agreed to, but only when *all* the follow-through is complete.

Why the opposition responds as it does

Reviewing some theories from social psychology may help you develop an understanding of why opponents respond as they do. It can also help you anticipate the actions or reactions of the opposition, and plot your own strategies.

In *Effective Social Action by Community Groups*, Alvin Zander examines the different perspectives that activists and target organizations may have with respect to change. The activists, who aim to reduce a source of dissatisfaction, have much to gain and little to lose. If they fail, it's rarely an embarrassment, because the objective was probably ambitious in the first place. Targets, on the other hand, have much to lose, regardless of their response. If they implement a proposal from advocates, they may not get any sense of accomplishment or pride, since the initiative was not their own.

Further, they may face the prospect of criticism from constituents or community members who believe the change to be unwise. Rejecting the proposal can also bring criticism, unless the idea is recognized as universally bad.

Zander lists three general ways targets are likely to respond to proposals for change:

1. Welcome the ideas of change agents

Targets most likely to respond to change are those not strong enough to withstand criticism. Targets are likely to welcome change:

- When it is seen as mutually beneficial;
- When both sides recognize as valid the other's point of view, and are eager to recognize similarities in goals;
- When the advocate group is non-threatening, and respects the autonomy of the decision-maker.

If those conditions are present, the target does not need to go on the defensive. The climate is fertile for compromise, or even surrender.

2. Oppose the ideas of change agents

A target may oppose the content of a proposal, claiming one of many possible reasons: it is illogical, unworkable, or immoral; it is based on invalid criticism; the solution would be too costly; the advocates do not represent community interests, etc. In this scenario, the target decision-makers want the activists to take "no" for an answer. At the same time, they want to avoid conflict, and might use delay and denial in the early stages to prevent conflict from developing. If the target does need to come right out and reject a proposal, it may try to explain its resistance in a way that invites minimum opposition from the activists. It may also try calming activists by offering token concessions with little substance, making the demands seem unreasonable—or the target may seek to postpone the decision indefinitely. (See "Deflect," "Delay," "Deny," "Deceive," "Dulcify.")

3. Resist the ideas of change agents

According to Zander, reasons for flat-out resistance vary widely: the target may feel advocates are seeking only their own benefit; the target may not accept the group's information; or the advocate group may have failed to clearly identify the problem. When targets throw up resistance, advocates respond with further resistance, giving rise to a circular situation. If the resistance-cycle is not broken by constructive problem-solving, and is allowed to build, the target may use more aggressive forms of resistance, including attempts to discredit or destroy advocate groups.

General guides for responding to the opposition

There are no pat formulas for responding to the other side, but you can start with this principle: you should always look for a strategy that fits the level of resistance from the opposition. It may be tempting to try a pre-emptive strike, hitting the opposition before it has mounted any major attack—but this is not usually advisable. While the element of surprise may be useful in some instances, forcing a target into the role of enemy before seeking a more civil or persuasive approach may blow an opportunity for negotiation, and could seriously damage your cause in the long run. Following is a partial list of techniques to guide your response, in line with the suggestions for “Advocacy ‘Etiquette’” in Chapter 4.

A. Turning negatives into positives

“A strong offense in an organizing campaign requires being ready to counter any defense your adversary might employ,” Lee Staples says in *Roots to Power*. Every attack presents an opportunity to turn what appears to be a negative situation into one where you gain the upper hand.

Responding to a lawsuit with a countersuit is an example of how tables may be turned. Discovery and deposition processes may give us the kind of information that can exert tremendous pressure on the target. If these processes produce public disclosures of potentially embarrassing information, this can strengthen a group's hand while, at the same time, forcing a target into a deeper defensive posture.

A small advocacy group that is being attacked in the courts by a powerful opponent can use the attack to attract sympathy, claiming that the legal assault is a draconian measure intended to bury the real issue. In some cases, the target can be shown as intent on depriving the group and others like it of their constitutional right to free speech, which is highly valued by most people in the United States. By framing an issue in terms favorable to your group or cause, even though in reality you might have suffered a setback, you may often get favorable press. For example, if you have lost a key city council vote on a health-related ordinance, rather than accepting defeat, you can talk about how this will provide fuel for further actions by health advocates. Or draw attention to the role that special interest groups (more powerful than good ol' citizens like you) played in defeating the ordinance. Or use the attention gained by the “loss” to promote your group or your group's cause to the community at-large.

Turning a negative into a positive is like counterpunching in boxing. A boxer does not simply block a punch. He responds offensively and instantaneously by attacking the opponent's unprotected or vulnerable area—like the ribs or the jaw. In ad-

vocacy, when targets attack they leave themselves vulnerable. We can respond proactively, instead of reactively, by spotting the vulnerable point and countering. There's another way of saying this: The key to dealing with trouble is for you to be the one who makes the trouble, rather than letting it happen you. And remember, what you learn in one defeat may be key to limiting future losses.

B. Going public with the opponent's tactics

There is a great deal of leverage to be gained by *labeling* the tactics used by the opposition. A tactic loses some of its power when uncovered for all to see. An example of this can be found in the way an advocacy group responds to the "divide and conquer" tactic. If advocates allow targets to play upon internal tensions, pitting them against each other, groups may turn their anger inward, and eventually self-destruct. Identifying the opposition's "divide and conquer" tactic as what it is may give renewed focus to the campaign. It can further strengthen the group by directing members' anger at the opponent, rather than at each other.

If a target responds to your demands by making token concessions, you can deflate this attempt by identifying the concessions for what they are—tokens. Not only does that maintain group focus on the objective, but it strengthens your hand in the campaign, assuring the public that a more favorable outcome is expected. (But make sure that the target's response is, in fact, a token. It could be very damaging to a campaign to stick the "token" label on a good-faith response, making the target justifiably suspicious about the group's motives.)

C. Framing the debate on *your* terms

If a target succeeds in getting you to discuss the matter on *its* terms, you have lost a significant measure of control. If you can avoid being forced on the defensive, you will gain an important edge. Thus, it is important to convey issues in terms that mesh with how *your* group thinks about it. If you cannot set the terms of the debate, it is advisable to at least not let the debate get out of control (i.e., don't get into a situation where you are constantly on the defensive, responding only to your opponent's arguments).

As we said in the last chapter, the ability to frame the debate on your terms is of vital importance to a number of tactical approaches. In the next chapter, we will give you additional suggestions for framing the issue as you reach out to the general public through the media. You need only look at how elected officials surround themselves with so-called "spin doctors" to understand the importance of framing—which can go far beyond choice of words. The setting can also "frame" an issue. For example, you could choose a forum for discussion that is uncomfort-

**"Even an ant may harm an
elephant."**

ZULU PROVERB

able to the opposition, such as a "seminar" they sponsored on company grounds, or a debate in front of an unfriendly crowd, with television cameras present. For your part, you want to arrange for your meetings to be as comfortable for you as possible, ejecting any hecklers or disruptive members of the opposition—or making them feel uncomfortable. And if you invite guests from the opposition for a discussion or debate, have your best speakers there to counter them. Nailing down terms of any confrontation will increase the likelihood that the issue does well in the amphitheater of debate.

D. Balance and illusion

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe that we are away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him."

SUN TZU,

ART OF WAR, 500 B.C.

Responding to the opponent's counterattacks with what they don't expect can give your campaign an edge. The principal—balance—is the same as that applied in sports. In tennis, the accomplished player keeps the opponent guessing with a variety of shots and placements—short, long, cross-court, top-spin, back-spin, lob. No single response can be anticipated. In many forms of athletic competition, the ability to "mix it up" is a definite plus. Similarly, keeping opponents off balance in health advocacy is crucial to disrupting their rhythm, momentum, and sense of timing. Because they cannot confidently anticipate and prepare for your moves, they are effectively deprived of an important edge.

Don't rely on set strategies. If you always stage a sit-in whenever decision-makers refuse to make concessions, for example, not only will the impact of this action diminish, but the target will grow increasingly efficient at blunting its effectiveness. It's better to respond with a wide repertoire of techniques making it tougher for opponents to predict your actions.

In this vein, nonviolent direct action, in and of itself, is an effective tactic for keeping the target off balance, and limiting repression. This is because while most systems and jurisdictions in this country are familiar with responses for squelching violence, they are knocked off stride by nonviolent actions. (For more on the use of nonviolence, see "G: Political jujitsu" on page 99.)

Illusion, similar to balance, goes one step further. The idea is to trick the opponent into wrongly guessing your intentions. In the world of magic, smoke and mirrors and similar techniques are used to draw the observers' attention to the wrong place, setting them up for deception. Using parallels again with sports, you can see how an edge is established with the play-action fake in football, the disguised forehand in tennis, the dink shot in volleyball, the curve and change-up pitches in baseball, and the feinting techniques in martial arts. All constitute the use of illusion for overpowering opponents.

A nice example of this tactic in action occurred during a television “debate” between a tobacco industry representative and Richard Daynard, a law professor at Northeastern University, and head of the Tobacco Products Liability Project. Professor Daynard was recruited to speak out against smokers’ rights. He knew that the task would not be easy. (As the physician/activist Alan Blum points out: “Debating the tobacco industry is like wrestling with a pig. You both get dirty and the pig loves it.”)

As the debate began, and the tobacco industry representative took the familiar party line about protecting the rights of smokers, Daynard realized that arguing against smokers’ rights might be ineffective for two reasons: first, everyone was expecting him to do it, so the opposition had adequate time to prepare counter-arguments. Second, it meant accepting the way the media and the tobacco industry framed the issue, rather than the way that an activist might frame it. Daynard decided to come out in support of smokers’ rights—but with a slight twist. The rights he favored were the rights of smokers to sue tobacco companies for their disease. The interviewer and tobacco industry representative were so taken aback, so unprepared for this line of reasoning, that Daynard had the debate won in a matter of moments. The lesson? Keep your opponent off balance. Frame the debate in your terms.

You can also call upon illusion to create an impression that you have many more resources than you do, or are planning more actions than is the case. This can force opponents to prepare for several different situations, thereby diluting their response to what you eventually do. Saul Alinsky, the Chicago-based community organizer who carried confrontational techniques to new heights, said: “Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.”

E. Know when to negotiate

To negotiate, in the context of advocacy, is to strive to settle a dispute. The process almost always involves compromise—not to be equated with capitulation or surrender. As a party to the negotiations, you have a right to participate in establishing the ground rules.

Opportunities for serious negotiations with the opposition may be rare and fleeting. More than likely, they will be delicate. You will be well-served to watch carefully for favorable signs that a chance for negotiation might be in the offing, because these chances may not be repeated. With experience, monitoring the climate for negotiation becomes easier (it’s extremely useful to have someone with experience on your side). For example, buried in a target’s otherwise belligerent statement about your campaign might be a hint about possible discussions: a spokesman might be quoted

as saying of your group, "Since they are so irresponsible, I doubt they would consider meeting with us." In the face of such posturing and the emotions it tends to arouse, the signal about a possible meeting can be missed, and the opportunity lost. But here is an opportunity that should be seized: the chance to sit down with the other side indicates your group has achieved respectability and standing. It is a welcome development when the target reaches out in any fashion.

As you saw from the chapter on tactics, advocates can benefit greatly by probing for negotiation opportunities. Many tactics are ways to test the wind for various possibilities that might lead to negotiation, such as a chance to participate in planning sessions; the development of formal communication mechanisms; and so on. Of course, you can undermine the chance for negotiations. One way to do that, paradoxically, is by proposing talks prematurely. Such overtures may be viewed as weakness on your part, possibly closing the door to negotiations for several months.

Within the delicate art of negotiation, compromise is the most fragile element. In *The Consumer Movement*, R. N. Mayer provides a sense of this dynamic: "In any negotiation, one can err either by compromising too readily, by giving up ground that one could have easily won with a little more persistence, or by being too unyielding, with the result that the negotiations break down and an opportunity for mutually beneficial exchange is lost."

Effective advocates will be constantly aware of the dynamic between themselves and the other party, as well as the political, economic and social context of the talks. If, for example, the social tide is increasingly supportive of anti-tobacco efforts, the health lobby will have a stronger hand to play in battling the tobacco industry. Alternatively, where the public feels heavily dependent on tobacco for economic security, the health lobby might accept compromise in the interest of its constituents.

F. Consider your opponent's psychology

In *Effective Social Action by Community Groups*, Alvin Zander sees actions along a spectrum from "permissive" to "pressuring" or "constraining." Examples of permissive actions include presenting a plan for addressing a problem, or working with the other side in problem-solving. Constraining approaches are those that are combative and coercive (e.g., a boycott, physical harm, etc.). "Like behavior tends to beget like behavior," Zander maintains. Hence, targets tend to respond to advice, argument, intervention or aggression with advice, argument, intervention or aggression. This tendency is modified by how much the target likes or dislikes the proposed change.

If a target is seeking solutions to a problem, advocates may have an opportunity to join the target in the effort, and, in that instance, permissive methods can reduce

resistance. Activists can further avert or diminish anxiety for the target organization by defining problems without immediately suggesting solutions. This shows respect for the target's autonomy. If and when the advocate group does propose solutions, advocates can soften these by proposing a tentative "trial period" so decision-makers do not feel fenced in.

Of course, such civil and permissive methods won't always work. You may have to resort to pressure tactics. Like mules averse to gentle persuasion, and immune to logic, some target organizations are more likely to accept change when hit on the head with a two-by-four, in the form of sit-ins, boycotts or other disruptive tactics.

When it does prove necessary, the pressure option is a longer road than the persuasive one, for many reasons. Targets are less likely to focus on the proposals than on the pressures being brought to bear, and their natural reaction is likely to be anger and resentment. If there is change, it will be in overt behavior: underlying beliefs will probably not be affected. Intensifying pressure increases the likelihood of heightened resistance, which will require more intense pressure, and so on. The feasibility of rational dialogue will diminish and the dispute may require help from a neutral process, like mediation (Zander, 1990).

G. Political jujitsu: Turning opponents' assets into liabilities, nonviolently

Gene Sharp gives us the term "political jujitsu" in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* to describe how the opposition undermines its own power. This phenomenon finds the opponent's greatest asset, its superior power, being transformed into a liability. "By combining nonviolent discipline with solidarity and persistence in struggle, the nonviolent actionists cause the violence of the opponent's repression to be exposed in the worst possible light," Sharp says. "This, in turn, may lead to shifts in opinion and then to shifts in power relationships favorable to the nonviolent group." Examples where political jujitsu has operated successfully include the campaign in India for independence from the British Empire, the American Civil Rights movement, and the defiance campaign in South Africa.

Social change groups tend to have much less power and authority than opponents such as corporations, government agencies or legislative bodies. Activists have less access to the commercial media, fewer financial and expert resources, and less access to decision-makers, and they do not have the police to enforce their decisions. That's where "political jujitsu" comes in. It allows the activists to use the power and superior force brought against them to their own advantage by bringing disfavor upon the system, or tripping it up.

How? Activists persist with nonviolent discipline until the system responds heavy-handedly, out of exasperation or frustration. The common result is a shift in

"When something bad happens because you take a stand for justice— if you lose a job, lose friends, go to jail— think about how it will look when you're 60. You may find that what seemed to be the worst possible thing at the time turned out to have been the best thing of all."

ANN BRADEN,
PEACE CALENDAR

public sympathy, with other social groups and forces surfacing to work with the activists. You will find this is especially true when the opponent's policies are hard to justify.

Persistence is a necessary element of political jujitsu, because the process may require substantial time. At the outset of nonviolent direct action campaigns, it is not uncommon for the community to react negatively to the activists. By their very tactics they are different, and thus candidates for suspicion. They may be labeled as "agitators," and blamed for any violence that does occur. In these early stages, supporters of change frequently split between the nonviolent militants and the more conventional reformers or moderates. Thus, there is often initial polarization, which may even bring the opponent some *increased* support. For the activists, this polarization period is one of the most critical parts of the process and it is crucial to the efficacy of their strategy that they avoid actions that might confirm negative prejudices about them. It is primarily during this time that those negative prejudices will be magnified or invalidated.

As the activists persist with their nonviolent discipline, maintaining solidarity, the violence of the system is exposed and rendered increasingly repulsive to the general public. Shifts begin in favor of the nonviolent group. Eventually, assuming the activists hold to their discipline, the scales are tipped, and the shifts in power relationships accelerate, leading to widespread opposition to the system and support for the resisters.

Political jujitsu causes shifts by operating among three broad groups:

1. Uncommitted third parties

The sight of people enduring severe repression because of a belief in a principle is a moving one that is likely to affect previously uninvolved people. This can be true on local, national, or international levels. For example, British repression of nonviolent Indian demonstrators swayed world opinion toward the Indians.

2. The opponents' usual supporters

When opponents employ violence against nonviolent demonstrators, there is a higher likelihood that they will arouse opposition in their own camp. Violent repression is hard to justify in the face of nonviolence, and thus is likely to be seen as unreasonable. Also, it is easier for members of the opponent group to express misgivings when activists remain nonviolent. When members of the opponent group start to question the means of repression, they may also begin to question the cause. Dissent within the opposition's own camp can range from discomfort to criticism of opposition tactics, all the way to positive efforts to aid the activists. This was true in 1963 when nonviolent resistance by Buddhists in South Vietnam drew harsh repression from the pro-Catholic govern-

ment regime. Reacting to this brutality, massive segments of the Catholic population withdrew support from the government.

3. The general grievance group

The ability to withstand repression can be related to a strong conviction in the rightness of a cause, the courage to withstand intimidation, and the capacity to bear suffering. While repression often reduces the number of nonviolent activists, it can strengthen the will of those resisting. Numbers, in nonviolent action, are not as important as strength and persistence.

With time, of course, opponents grow more adept at responding to nonviolent action. They may use less violent means of repression to blunt the effects of political jujitsu. This does not mean the cause is lost. The grab bag of nonviolent tactics is huge, and includes economic sanctions in addition to political, social, and psychological pressure. And if opponents reduce the violent repression, or refrain from it, new doors open for other kinds of conflict resolution. (See Sharp: *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*.)

H. Concentrate strength against weakness: Insights from military science

Military science provides basic lessons about concentrating strength against an opponent's weakness for substantial gain. Although health activists may not feel comfortable borrowing from this source, military theory includes some tools that can be applied in health advocacy by either side. Hence, it's helpful to consider them, not only for your options, but in thinking defensively about your own "exposed flank." As you review the following concepts, think in terms of advocacy campaigns as much as possible.

Concepts of military strategy

Because the principle of war involves concentrating strength against weakness, a useful strategy is to create the appearance that your forces are being dispersed, which in turn causes dispersal of enemy forces. When that happens, concentration of force will be more likely to succeed. A fundamental error is giving opponents the freedom and time to concentrate to meet *your* concentration.

One military theorist says perfect military strategy produces a resolution without serious fighting (Liddell Hart, 1944). Hence, the point is not to seek battle, but a strategic situation so obviously advantageous that if it does not produce a decision, the battle surely will. The process develops defeat in the mind of the opponent even before battle is joined.

physically and psychologically; accomplished techniques for demoralizing and distracting the opposition; the use of indirect rather than frontal approaches; and concentration of strength against weakness at crucial times.

For its part, the opposition might respond with the classic tactics of counter-insurgency, traditionally used by powerful bodies such as governments to head off guerilla warfare. In *Counterinsurgency: Some Problems and Implications*, Edgar S. Furniss, Jr. delineates the difference between positive and negative counterinsurgency. On the positive side would be improvements in conditions that cause the need for guerilla action to evaporate, while a negative example might include repressing the rebel groups with such tactics as espionage, sabotage and selective terror.

Similarly, a large organization can rely on positive or negative action to ward off attack by an advocate group seeking change. Positive action includes coopting the advocates' cause, and making concessions designed to win loyalty. Negative action would include tactics designed to discredit and destroy the advocacy group. It is useful for advocates to be able to ascertain whether conciliatory offers are being made in good faith, or as part of a long-term strategy to destroy the group.

Finally, here are two last military analogies, concerning learning from one's mistakes, and making sure of victory:

- Obviously, it is good strategy to learn from mistakes. An attack should not be renewed along the same lines once it has failed. Two similar setbacks will be very costly, not only in terms of resources but also because of the lost confidence experienced by the losing side.
- Military theorists recommend that victories be exploited. When opponents are defeated in war, victors want them to stay that way. There is a parallel for health advocacy. When a target organization is brought to terms, you should leave no doubt about the results, exploiting the victory to the fullest. The object is to keep buried a problem that required so much time and commitment to bury.

Summary

In advocacy, every response leads to a counter-response: the group that can guess the nature of the opposition's counter-response will be ahead of the game. Even though the process may be hard and time-consuming, it will be well worth your while to put yourselves in your opponents' place and anticipate their moves. You will then avoid being taken by surprise, and can make your next move in this advocacy chess game with calm deliberation.

Using the Media

This chapter will describe the use of media and public relation tactics in support of health advocacy. Effective use of the media can be important to your success in a number of ways:

- The media can increase decision-makers' and the public's knowledge of the issue, and put it on the public agenda;
- The media can help change attitudes, and mobilize support by framing the issue on your terms (see Chapter 7, page 61);
- The support of the media can provide a valuable weapon in your armory, by bolstering your standing in relationship to the opposition;
- When used in conjunction with other advocacy tactics, the media can also influence community health norms.

As you will see, most of our suggestions are for media coverage through news programs, talk shows, features, and editorials. At the end of the chapter, we will include some tips for incorporating public service advertising (PSAs), "small" media, and word of mouth in your campaign.

Preparing a media campaign

As politicians and businesses know very well, media campaigns cannot be left to chance. Careful preparation is key. It is important to think through your media campaign—in the context of your overall strategy—well before you issue your first press release, or invite the media to your first demonstration. This will mean:

- Researching the local media to find out which newspapers, TV channels or radio stations reach the audience you most want to affect, and which people in those media outlets will be your best contacts;
- Preparing consistent themes and messages that frame your message in a positive light, and give continuity to your campaign;

- Incorporating media plans into your overall strategic plan, so that major campaign events can be designed (when appropriate) with media requirements in mind;
- Carrying out your campaign with the sort of confidence and professionalism that shows the media you mean business.

Researching the local media

Even before you have specific plans for stories, assign volunteers to research local media outlets. They should listen to the radio stations, watch the TV programs, and read the newspapers. It is helpful to compile information about the outlets in a “media inventory” that can tell you at a glance whom to approach to fulfill different needs—especially at the outlets that reach the largest numbers of people, or the people you most want to affect. Here are the main questions to which you will need answers:

- **What is the audience for each of the media outlets?**
Your researchers can call the media outlets directly to find out their audience composition and their reach—the geographical area covered.
- **Which news reporters are assigned to cover the type of story that you might generate? Which editors or producers might be most sympathetic?**
On a large newspaper or TV station, many reporters specialize, either because they are assigned to a certain beat, or as a matter of personal interest. The media outlet can tell you who these are. As the campaign progresses, personal contact will become particularly important. Some of your best media coverage might come about because an advocate can pick up the phone and tip off a friendly reporter or producer about a breaking story.
- **Which feature columns or talk programs might offer in-depth coverage of the issue?**
In addition to the news stories, you should consider the possibility of getting much longer and more in-depth coverage—for example, through features in different sections of the newspaper; on television interview shows or news magazine shows; or on call-in or interview programs on radio. You will greatly increase your chances of getting extensive exposure if you can demonstrate to producers and editors that you are familiar with their output, and are able to tailor a presentation to suit their audience and their interests.
- **What are the important deadlines for the programs or newspaper editions that you most want to appear in?**
Knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the business will help you choose the most convenient time for press conferences and staged events.

- Which newspaper or broadcast editorial boards might be most receptive to the idea of officially backing your issue, and run editorials in your support?

Knowing what type of issues have won editorial backing in the past can give you guidance about whether to make a formal pitch to an editorial board to win endorsement. (If the outlet is owned by a conglomerate with links to the opposition, or is dependent on advertising over which the opposition may exert some control, your chances may not be great!)

Choosing the channel of communication

A comprehensive media campaign attempts to use as many channels of communication as necessary to get broad coverage, and to demonstrate clout. However, media outlets all have their own advantages and disadvantages, and may need to be approached or used in different ways:

Television is an excellent way to reach a lot of people at once. Formats include news stories and series; public affairs programs; talk shows; editorials; and paid advertising. Stations also run free public service announcements (PSAs), but these may be expensive to produce, may not be aired while people are awake, and may not be shown at all if they seem controversial.

Many communities now have opportunities for using public access television, and these are worth exploring. However, public access programs are not widely seen, and thus require a major promotion program to attract an audience.

Radio has a number of formats similar to television, but is often more accessible, and may provide a better way to reach your audience. This is especially true if you want to reach subgroups of the population, such as teenagers or members of ethnic groups, who may form the predominant audience of certain stations.

In some communities, call-in talk shows on radio carry a good deal of influence, and can be helpful in setting the agenda. If you need to advertise a specific event or program, radio may give you a reasonable placement for free PSAs.

Newspapers can offer spot news coverage, such as a single story on a particular health topic, or multipart news coverage, such as a series on teenagers and gang membership. Editorials, letters to the editor, op-ed guest columns, and even editorial cartoons are also good ways to get your message across, if the paper chooses to give you this type of support. Other sections of the paper such as those devoted to sports, business, or lifestyle may offer opportunities for more detailed information in feature stories.

"We must figure out how we can make an impact on society without being one of the power players. The more you can get the public involved in the issue, the greater the likelihood that you will succeed."

AN ADVOCATE

Neighborhood newspapers are an excellent way to reach a targeted audience, and especially valuable if you are addressing neighborhood concerns such as placement of tobacco billboards.

Keeping up the contact

Personal contact is of vital importance in media relations. The gatekeepers at all levels are more likely to do you a favor if they know who you are. Early in the campaign, designate one or two people as your media contacts. These may or may not be the people who conducted the initial research (see above) or who serve as your spokespeople (see below). They should be knowledgeable about the media, because it is they who will set up press conferences, put their names on press releases, and help reporters find stories or photo opportunities.

Here are some suggestions to help those contact people establish a good working relationship with the press.

- Stay in touch! For example:
 - Instead of mailing press releases, drop them off in person (pick a time when the editor or reporter is not close to a deadline, and may have time to talk);
 - If there's a national story breaking, phone the reporter who covers that beat and ask if he or she would like your organization to provide an exclusive local angle;
 - Hand out Rolodex cards with the name of your organization's main expert. This makes it easier for reporters to call for information whenever your issue is in the news.
- Make a point of thanking the media people who help, or who produce stories about your organization or issue. Write to their superiors to praise their contribution.
- Don't complain if your material is not used—though it's OK to ask how you can improve your chances next time.

Choosing your spokespeople

Before launching a full-scale media campaign, your group should select one or two spokespeople. By limiting the number of spokespeople to one or two, you will help the press, and the public, to put a name and a face to your issue, and will ensure that your message is consistent. Also, your spokespeople will become increasingly adept as they get practice in speaking to the press, or appearing on interview shows.

Choose your spokespeople with care:

- They should be deeply committed to your issue, and should be prepared to learn about it in depth, so that all the facts and arguments that might come up in an interview will be at their fingertips;
- They should enjoy talking in public, and be good at it;
- They should be available, often on short notice, in case a major story breaks;
- If possible, they should be known and respected in the community—a well-known physician, for example, might be an excellent choice.

Preparing your message

Before you go public, you should frame your message in a format that the media can use most efficiently, and that will be most effective. Your goal is to enable the general public to understand your issue, and to put your “spin” on the facts of the case, counteracting the arguments that your opponents may use (see Chapter 7, page 61, for examples of “framing the issue” in your terms.)

Experts recommend that you select three to five main points, and plan to stress them consistently. You should make those points the centerpiece of interviews or presentations, and return to them in any debate with opponents. Most news coverage will allow you space or time to make only these few points. It is in your interest to make sure they are well-developed and punchy. Here are some suggestions for distilling complicated data into “media bites” that will help convey the information you want:

- If you need to use complex statistics, use “social math” to bring the numbers to life. For example, rather than giving a death rate of 1,000 or so in numbers, say it’s the equivalent of two jumbo jets colliding and crashing with no survivors.
- Use striking images. For example, point out that making part of a room smoke free is like chlorinating only one end of a swimming pool.
- Localize an issue with statistics that apply to your community: be prepared with brief local case histories to illustrate your point. “One woman in Green Acres waited fifty-three minutes for the police to respond!”

You have your issue. You have your spokespeople. You have your main points and your counterarguments all ready. You know which press outlets you most want to carry your story. How do you put it all together? In the following sections, we give suggestions for getting news coverage, making use of editorial opportunities, and preparing for interviews.

Gaining access

Broadly speaking, there are four ways you can get news coverage of your issue:

- By staging a newsworthy event
- By holding a press conference
- By issuing press releases
- By feeding stories to individual reporters, feature writers or producers.

The newsworthy event

As you saw in the chapter on tactics, a successful advocacy organization often has the potential to generate events that news media enjoy covering. The media are always on the lookout for good, strong stories, especially if there is a photo-opportunity involved. They pay attention when groups of citizens use imaginative tactics (for example, "Flooding the system," No. 38). Many direct action tactics can be planned with the media in mind, or you can build in elements that are likely to attract the attention of both the media and the public. One excellent example was the action taken by a group of teenagers in Solano County, California, who purchased over 250 packages of cigarettes or smokeless tobacco in an undercover buying operation. The media were then invited to watch the teenagers throw the tobacco into a hazardous waste container, which was then prepared for disposal at a hazardous waste site. The media coverage was excellent.

When you plan an event that you hope will make news, send out notices to the press ahead of time to tell them what will be happening, when and where. Have your spokespeople ready to answer their questions, whether or not you combine the event with a formal press conference.

The press conference

Press conferences should be used very sparingly. They are a nuisance for the media to attend, and if nothing very newsworthy emerges from your first, you may find no one comes to your second. In general, press conferences should be held only if you have significant, dramatic, timely and/or controversial news to announce; if you produce people who are too interesting or important for the press to ignore; or if you have a tremendous story in human interest terms.

If you decide to hold a press conference, here are some rules of thumb:

- Hold the press conference in the morning, to get the best coverage.
- Notify editors and broadcast news producers several days in advance. Remind them with phone calls the day before the event.

- Prepare press kits containing background information and a press release (see below).
- Have the press sign in. If any important people are missing, call them later; hand-deliver press kits, and offer to arrange interviews.
- Pay attention to logistics. Choose a quiet location; provide maps so everyone can find you.
- Pay attention to setting and drama. You'll get most coverage if you can produce more than "talking heads." For example, have teenagers in project T-shirts talking about their experiences, or people giving emotional accounts of disasters or achievements.
- Limit prepared statements by your spokespeople to one or two, of no more than five minutes each, then take questions.

Press releases

Press releases, like press conferences, can wear out their welcome if they don't give the media something they can use. Keep them for when you have something new to announce—and think of ways to make the story more attractive by building it around additional "hooks." Can you announce a milestone, such as the first time a community event is sponsored by a fruit juice company, rather than a brand of beer? Is this an anniversary? For example, the anniversary of a particularly violent crime could provide a springboard for the announcement of a crime-prevention initiative. Can you use a seasonal event or holiday as a peg? High school graduation can provide a framework for stories on drunk driving, or New Year's day for a press release on health-related resolutions. Is someone of prominence involved? Can you provide a local human interest angle? Giving a human face to a story gets the message across better than a recitation of facts (though be careful not to let your story be drowned by one individual's perspective).

Once you have a solid story for your release, give it a professional look by following these guidelines:

- Use stationery that shows clearly where the release is coming from (a banner heading with the name of your organization in large type is better than regular letterhead).
- Use a headline that explains what the release is about. Don't try to be cute—that's the newspaper's job.
- Double space the text; leave generous margins; use only one side of the paper, and don't use more than two pages.
- Write the story as an inverted pyramid, with the most important information first. If only the top half or third or even fifth of what you've written is used, it will still make sense.

- Make the opening paragraph no longer than three or four lines, and include information about “who, what, where and when.”
- Either write, “For immediate release” or, “For release on (date).”
- Include the name and telephone number of one or two people who can be contacted for additional information.

Dealing with individual reporters

Being a resource for good story ideas is one of the most important things you can offer media organizations. Don't assume that they are brimming over with stories concerning your community. Quite often, they are actively looking for new local ideas, and in some communities rely increasingly on dependable help from knowledgeable people.

Your best media coverage may come from in-depth reports or features set up through your relationships with the individual reporters or producers. As your campaign progresses, your designated media experts should develop contacts with members of the press, and suggest stories to them. (In some cases, your campaign may develop such momentum that the reporters and TV producers call you for ideas!)

Using the editorial sections

Editorial sections can help your campaign in two ways: giving you free exposure, and/or giving you the endorsement of the newspaper or the broadcast station.

Editorials

Newspapers and some broadcast outlets will give their editorial endorsement to certain local events or campaigns. To encourage this, ask if your spokespeople can make a brief presentation at one of the regular meetings of the editorial board. Even if a paper does not print an editorial supporting you, it may provide space for your views on its op-ed page. Many TV and radio stations provide opportunities for people to deliver their own free speech messages.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor can help spread your message—but use them sparingly, making one strong point at a time.

Letters can be used to demonstrate the strength of your group, especially if you orchestrate a letter writing campaign around some burning issue. They won't all

be printed, but the editor will get the message. Sometimes, thank-you letters to the editor will also be appropriate.

Interviews

Interviews come in two types: those you initiate, and those that are set up by the media outlet. In either case, whether the interview is for broadcast or for a newspaper, make sure your spokesperson is prepared. He or she should have:

- Background knowledge about your organization and campaign;
- Knowledge of the issue, including any controversy about it either locally, regionally or nationally;
- The three to five basic points that you want to stress;
- Knowledge of what counterarguments may be made during the interview, and how to refute them.

Your spokesperson should also watch the program that he or she is going to appear on, or read articles by the reporter doing a newspaper interview. This person should also practice, with a member of your group taking the part of the interviewer, and asking the hardest questions that might come up.

Brief the reporter or interviewer

If there is time, always give the interviewer background information, and ask about the direction the interview is likely to take. Although they don't like to give you their questions in advance, interviewers will usually tell you about the ground they expect to cover, and, in the case of a broadcast, who else will be on the program.

Watch out for traps

The press loves controversy, and may try to get you into a defensive position, or invite you to attack an opponent. Stay calm. Try to avoid the appearance of being angry, embarrassed or surprised. If someone makes an outrageous allegation, correct the facts, but don't attack the people who distorted them.

It is wise to have another member of your organization present at all interviews. If the interview is later distorted during editing, this person can help you get the record put straight.

Experienced advocates suggest that you don't tell a reporter anything "off the record." Most will respect your wishes, but the risks are too great if they do not.

Other channels of communication

Ultimately, your choice of media should be dictated by the audience you want to reach. To get your message across, you may need to go beyond the confines of the news. Whom do you want to reach, and how can you reach them? It may be that educational videos have a role in your campaign, reaching people in community clinic waiting rooms or at community forums. Employee newsletters could be a good vehicle, or small ethnic papers. In some cases, you may want to consider advertising.

Advertising

If you are given free space (for example, on buses or billboards) or free air-time (on TV or radio) you may have little control over the way your message is disseminated. It's all too common for TV PSA's to go out in the middle of the night. If it is extremely important for you to make an announcement that will reach a high proportion of the population (for example, if you are announcing an upcoming event) then it might be worth your while to buy newspaper space, or air-time (radio is usually a better bargain than TV for this purpose.) Also, strategically placed paid ads in buses, rail transit cars or waiting areas could support your efforts.

Print products

In addition to using the mass media, you may want to incorporate smaller printed pieces into your campaign, such as brochures describing your mission; booklets or handouts to help individuals make behavior changes; flyers or posters announcing events.

Even though there are probably people in your group who are handy with their computers, and feel they can make adequate materials themselves, it is wise to consult a professional graphic designer. People pay more attention to materials that look good.

One problem with print products is their distribution. Leaving them in doctors' offices or other public settings is usually not sufficient. You may have to get out to places such as movie theaters, laundromats, beauty or barber shops, grocery stores, retail outlets, libraries, places of worship, music stores, malls, worksites, schools—wherever the people you want to reach congregate. In some cases you can solve the distribution problem by adding your message to something that is already widely distributed, such as telephone book advertisements, yearbooks, souvenir programs, restaurant placemats, grocery bags and carts, or paycheck envelope inserts.

One possible resource for distribution is the human being, who can act as a walking (or driving) billboard. T-shirts, visors and caps are good places for messages. Bumper stickers can also provide excellent exposure.

Word of mouth

For many communities, word of mouth may be the most effective communication channel, especially for the so-called hard to reach people who do not receive information from TV, radio, newspaper or print messages. These groups may put the most trust in information from those they socialize with on a regular basis. Social clubs, sports leagues, boys and girls organizations, school clubs or educational organizations, religious and political groups, neighborhood associations, fraternal organizations, boards and committees, local merchants and business associations are all good channels. The point is to be creative about where you advocate your message.

Summary

To sum up: put your message in as many places and in as many formats as possible, based on knowledge of where your audience gets its information, and how you can best harness the power of local media. The idea is not only to influence policy-makers and community decision-makers, but also to change the general population's perception about health-related issues. Do not, however, compartmentalize media activities, or segregate them from the rest of your campaign. No matter how many column inches or broadcast minutes you achieve, your media campaign is unlikely to be effective unless media use is integrated into broader project plans.

Sections of this chapter are partially adapted from *Media Advocacy For Tobacco Control* by Linda Weiner, published by the Stanford Health Promotion Resource Center with funds from the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section (1994).

Appendix A

Power Structure Research

Here you will find more information on the techniques of power structure research mentioned in Chapter 3: "Understanding the Issue."

Power structure research is one example of root cause analysis, which was discussed in Chapter 3. It may be more complicated and controversial than other methods discussed in this handbook; you should consider carefully whether you want to apply this method to your issue. The potential pitfalls are obvious: it may be all too easy to put the opposition on the defensive too early, before you are ready. However, for some groups and for some issues, power structure research provides the best way to determine root causes and points for intervention.

Power structure research starts with two questions:

- Who is responsible for the problem?
- Who has the power to solve it?

There are three well-established steps you can take to answer those questions:

1. Identify the relevant information infrastructure;
2. Crack the information bank;
3. Having identified the power, go straight to it for information.

1. Identify the relevant information infrastructure

Ties between institutions and modern technology produce a steady flow of accurate data on virtually every aspect of human behavior. For each sector of society, there is an information infrastructure. It may be in government agencies, university research centers, professional organizations, trade associations, special libraries, or companies that publish trade books, periodicals and newspapers. Numerous reference books available in libraries help identify the information infrastructure, including the *United States Government Organization Manual*, the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, the *Research Centers Directory*, the *Foundation Directory*, the *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers*, and the *Directory of National Trade and Professional Associations in the United States*.

2. Crack the information bank

Having identified relevant sources, the next step is accessing information to determine your issue's key players. U.S. citizens have legal access to vast banks of public documents and data. Some simple techniques can improve your chances of gaining the requested data in a timely fashion. Examples include the use of printed stationery, which makes your request look professional; telephoning, until you can pinpoint the right person for a request; familiarizing yourself with relevant professional jargon; or developing contacts on the inside. Here are some ways to gain insight into the workings of corporations, law firms, individuals and affiliations, elected officials, property owners, lobbyists and government officials.

A. Major corporations

Investigative forays into corporations invariably lead with several basic questions (see Collette: *Research Guide for Leaders*), including:

1. Who owns and controls the company?
2. Who are the officers and directors, and what are their interlocking directorates?
3. What are the money flow and financial relationships between them?
4. What problems has the company experienced?

Annual reports provide the company's view of its history, management, financial condition, plant locations and future plans. Biased though annual reports they may be, there are facts to be gleaned from them. Publicly held corporations must file numerous reports with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including Form 10-K, Form 8-K, a proxy statement, and Form 13-F. They are prime sources of information about the firm's stock ownership; its directors and executive officers, including their wealth and holdings; money flow; pending legal proceedings; mergers and acquisitions; changes in control or assets; and major institutional stockholders.

There are a variety of directories available in public libraries that describe the directors, officers and interlocking relationships. Examples are Standard and Poor's *Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives* and Dun & Bradstreet's *Middle Market Directory*. Investment guides, such as *Value Line's Investment Survey* and *Moody's Banking and Finance Manual* give you information about stock ownership and control.

Court records from actions where corporations have been plaintiffs or defendants can be a veritable gold mine of information, whether through documents that were admitted as evidence, or from the trial's record of testimony. Other state and

local records, such as tax assessment records, may contain useful information about the firm, its managers, lawyers, allies and enemies.

Still other resources, such as Standard and Poor's *Corporation Records*, provide more detailed descriptions of many companies' production and financial structure.

B. Law firms

Many politicians, lobbyists and decision-makers are lawyers. The Martindale-Hubbell *Law Directory* gives information on all lawyers and most law firms in the country, including biographical data, a partial listing of corporate clients, and often financial worth.

C. Individuals and their affiliations

Who's Who directories for almost every vocation, location and minority present a range of information, including biographical data, corporate involvements, and past political relationships. Research can determine a range of affiliations from both *Who's Who* directories and the *Foundation Directory*. These would indicate ties between corporations; between law firms and corporations; between foundations and the web of banks, corporations, and non-profits.

Court records will state whether a person has ever been arrested, sued or had judgments against him or her, as well as whether the subject has ever had anyone else arrested or sued. Tax records show what real estate a person owns, the assessed value of the property, improvements on the property and delinquent taxes. For more specific guidance, see D. Noyes' *Raising Hell*.

D. Elected officials

"To understand politicians, you need to follow the money" (Noyes, 1983). The ethics statement, also known in some locations as a "statement of economic interests," lists a politician's income from outside sources, such as stock dividends, consulting fees, income from speaking engagements, and sales commissions.

Campaign reporting forms give expense records of campaigns. Voting records are also public information. Common Cause, a public interest advocacy organization, examines such records to see if there are any links between elected officials' major campaign contributors and their voting records.

E. Property owners

Local property and/or tax documents, which are public records on file with local governmental agencies, provide information about property owners.

F. Lobbyists

Major interest groups, including corporations, trade associations, churches, labor organizations and citizens groups, employ people to lobby for them at city hall, the state capital and Congress. Lobbyists must register in most states with the secretary of state.

G. Non-elected government officials

The U.S. Civil Service Commission, the *Federal Yellow Book* and the *National Directory of State Agencies* show how various governmental offices, branches and bureaus are organized. The *Congressional Directory* provides basic background information about the staffs of elected officials.

3. Having identified the power, go straight to it for information

Who but decision-makers can offer as much information about decision-makers? Interviewing them can be very informative. This is often the case even if they're engaged in subterfuge, because when we spot camouflage or denial we can often tap into some of the target's major weaknesses. You will invariably find rewards when you come to such interviews prepared, knowing as much as possible about the individual, his or her organization, and the topic of interest.

As you will find, revealing all that you know will not necessarily help you achieve the goal of gaining more information. Indeed, attempts to dazzle the targets with the extent of your knowledge are likely to put them on the defensive, which may lead to stonewalling, or a series of misleading statements. The best approach is one that will ensure, to the extent possible, the comfort of your subject. To this end, it's useful to open with small talk as you and the subject seek common ground and, hence, a comfort zone. You're not co-opting your principles, but preserving this opportunity to gain potentially vital information—to learn by listening, or to lead the conversation where you want it to go.