How-to: Build a Coalition

Goal
Build a strategic coalition of groups that support your campaign, assist in executing tactics, and help influence your target by demonstrating your power.

Best Practices
• Before reaching out to potential coalition partners, think about the type of coalition you’re looking to build and what you’ll ask them for.
  o Are you just asking for an endorsement of your campaign, or do you want more involvement?
  o What does your group bring to the table?
• Your coalition should demonstrate a broad base of support, so don’t limit yourself to only reaching out to similar groups.
  o Think about which potential coalition partners represent constituencies that will influence your target.

How-to
1) Set goals and a plan for coalition building
   • How big does your coalition need to be?
   • Think about what type of coalition will influence your target
     o What does your target care about? (Education, health, small businesses?) Some common groups in your community:
       ▪ Religious groups
       ▪ Businesses
       ▪ Unions
       ▪ Co-ops
       ▪ Nature/Wildlife groups
       ▪ Youth organizations
       ▪ Other community groups
   • What should be the breakdown of different types of coalition partners?
     o You might want a coalition with 10 groups signed on, and 3 or 4 groups from different categories to show broad support.

2) Create a sign-on letter
   • Your sign-on letter should be a statement of your main principles and campaign objective that you’ll use to collect endorsements.
     o Similar to your petition language
     o Directed at your target
   • Work with your Food & Water Watch contact to develop your letter.
3) Build a list

- Start an excel file to build your list of groups, and to track your outreach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org/Business Name</td>
<td>Type of group</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Contact person</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Last Contacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lehigh Valley Sierra Club</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td><a href="http://pennsylvania.sierraclub.org">http://pennsylvania.sierraclub.org</a></td>
<td>Julie McDonald</td>
<td>610-433-5637</td>
<td><a href="mailto:julie@asc.org">julie@asc.org</a></td>
<td>Group meets every 2 months</td>
<td>15-Oct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Loule's Italian Restaurant</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td><a href="http://www.loulerestaurant.com/loulebelletierci">http://www.loulerestaurant.com/loulebelletierci</a></td>
<td>Loule Belletier</td>
<td>610-455-2946</td>
<td><a href="mailto:loule@loules.com">loule@loules.com</a></td>
<td>Popular restaurant in the area</td>
<td>18-Oct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bethlehem Unitarian Church</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uucivpa.org/">http://www.uucivpa.org/</a></td>
<td>Jim Smith</td>
<td>610-453-9731</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jimsmith@uucivpa.org">jimsmith@uucivpa.org</a></td>
<td>Community meeting</td>
<td>18-Oct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Allentown Farmers Market</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fairgroundfarmersmarket.com">http://www.fairgroundfarmersmarket.com</a></td>
<td>Sarah Fried</td>
<td>610-457-3354</td>
<td>sarahf@fairgrounds</td>
<td>Open 3 days/week, local</td>
<td>17-Oct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Start with “low-hanging fruit” (groups likely to sign on), and build from there.
- The rule of halves also applies here. Your list should be big enough to get you the number of sign-ons you need:
  - If you have a list of 50 potential coalition sign-ons, you’ll be able to contact half (25) and roughly half will sign on (12).
- Find contact information for someone you can get in touch with:
  - The higher up in the group/business, the better
  - Phone numbers are best

4) Research your list of groups/people

- Before contacting a potential coalition partner, think through:
  - Why would they be interested in signing on? (What’s in it for them?)
  - What can they provide? (sign-on only, or do they have an email list, valuable contacts in their community, other resources?)
  - What is your group willing/able to give to them?

5) Make contact

- Email the coalition letter ahead of time and follow up with a phone call.
- Prepare for each call by reviewing whatever background information you have for that person or group
- Have a list of asks ready
  - Sign on to coalition letter
  - Provide meeting/event space
  - Make an announcement about your initiative at their group meeting
  - Help promote events by contacting their members
  - Help you network with other groups
  - Speak at a press conference, etc.
6) Make an ask
   - Make it strong and direct
     - “Can we add your name to our coalition letter?”
     - vs. “I was hoping you would consider signing on to our coalition letter”
   - If they say yes, confirm that you have their information listed correctly.
   - Once they’re on board, see how else they might be able to help (from your list of asks).

7) Make a follow-up plan
   - They might need more time to consider signing on or helping with your campaign.
   - Set up another time to check in (as soon as possible)