

The Tools of Engagement Organizing

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A brief overview of insights from recent **Sustainability Network** workshops and webinars.

What is Engagement Organizing?

- Meeting your mission by identifying the people who share your values and helping them to take ever increasing roles in making it happen.
- It is a set of tools and practices that support citizen mobilization and leadership to effect change.
- Key elements include using database technology, to build and sustain relationships, that result in greater levels of participation, all supported by appropriate training.
- Engagement organizing works to shift the activities of the organization from staff to volunteers.

Why use Engagement Organizing?

- It provides a means of developing the capacity to meet mission that is less dependent on government and foundation support.
- It enhances the citizen capacities of individuals and groups.
- When effectively employed it can prompt many individuals into leadership roles.

The Elements of Engagement Organizing

1. Theory of Change

Every organization has a mission to accomplish in order to address a need or challenge or take advantage of an opportunity. Unfortunately there is only a limited amount of time and other resources to direct to the mission. How to ensure that these are best applied? By going through the process of mapping out a Theory of Change, each organization can carefully consider what it specifically needs to do in order to best apply the limited resources it has to achieve mission.

Express Theory of Change elements as, “ if we do **x** then we expect **y** to happen”.

If you don't have a theory of change then all your work may just be a case of not knowing where you are going or how you are going to get there.

Learn more:

<http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/evaluation-methodology/an-introduction-to-theory-of-change>

<http://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change/>

2. Telling Your Stories

To communicate our work we need to tell good stories. To be compelling, stories need elements of values, emotions and actions.

3. Using Database Technology

Databases and related and interconnected communications software are the brains of any organization that is trying to scale up its relationship building. It is generally best to only have one brain.

4. Identifying Your People and Knowing your People

By taking the time to carefully articulate who your people are, an organization prepares itself to more effectively determine where they are and how to reach them. You can characterize who they are, what values you share, why they would support you and what do you want them to do?

5. Initial Contact or Recruitment and Relationship Building

Once you have an idea of who your people are it leads to having a better idea of how to find them. With data you can work out the best means of recruiting them and setting up ongoing contact. From there it is a case of expanding the relationship and helping them to take on more responsibility in meeting mission.

6. Planning and Training for Greater Levels of Engagement

An engagement pyramid is a tool that helps you identify the levels of engagement. By carefully defining each step in the pyramid you create the goal for actions to help your people step to the next level. Based on the skills required, training is prepared to help them be effective contributors.

7. Distribute Leadership

To be most effective Engagement Organizing initiatives plan for the distribution of leadership to those volunteers willing and able to take on higher levels of responsibility. Planning for this sharing of power makes it much more likely for it to happen.

These are the main tools of Engagement Organizing. By adopting any one of them an organization becomes more robust in its work to meet mission. Taken and applied together, they can help any organization change the world.