

Start Up an Affordable Energy Coalition

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Start Up an Affordable Energy Coalition

**“Use today’s bad market conditions to
organize and manage an action-oriented
energy consumer coalition”**

(Designed for states without one)

Getting me started

- I know how I would start a coalition. I've done that, but...
- My Challenge has been: Can I explain that to anyone else?
- Reminded me of a Newt Gingrich principle
 - You don't know your subject until you teach it to someone
 - Teaching is an integral component of organizing

Getting me started (continued)

- Anyone who has ever worked with me gets to hear about the three Ps
 - **Power**
 - **Politics**
 - **Policy**

Getting me started (continued)

- Power

- You got to have some of this
- Do not underestimate what you have
 - Your power is equal to what you have **plus**
 - What others think you have
 - "We were a silent, hidden thought in the folds of oblivion, and we have become a voice that causes the heavens to tremble."

Kahlil Gibran

Getting me started (continued)

- Two ways that I know to get power
 1. Money – In Illinois power is for sale.
 2. People – If you do not have money you have to have people.
 - Ideas without power don't matter
 - Thousands of people who agree on an idea and are willing to take action - MATTER

Getting me started (continued)

■ Politics

- Definition of Politics: "Poli" in Latin meaning "many" and "tics" meaning "blood-sucking parasites."
- "To succeed in politics, it is often necessary to rise above your principles."
- The truth is – if you want to get anything done as an advocate – your policy ideas will have to be put on someone's political agenda
- That will never happen without power.
- Fredrick Douglas: "Power has never yielded without a demand, it never has and it never will."

Getting me started (continued)

- Policy

- If you have power you can get on a political agenda
- If you get on a political agenda, you can get policy
- Caution: Make sure you know what you want before the politicians take it over
 - If it can be messed up
 - It will be messed up

Getting me started (continued)

- Anyone who has worked with me also gets to hear about the three Cs
 - **Courage**
 - **Commitment**
 - **Collaboration**

Getting me started (continued)

■ **Courage**

- It takes courage to step up to the plate
- Nothing changes until someone decides to take the risk of burning some capital
- It can be personal capital or organizational capital
 - It could be you already have one of these or both
 - It could be that you decide to start building some capital
 - Either way, it takes courage
- One of the best quotes I ever heard about organizing:
“What we need around here is a truck load of spine!”

Getting me started (continued)

■ Commitment

- Once you start – you have to stick with it
- You gotta' have heart
- There will be many obstacles or barriers to your efforts – on this you can rely
- It helps to have allies that have credibility
- It helps to know what you are talking about – but do not let this stop your motivation
 - If you know one fact – you probably know as much as most people know
 - If you know two facts – you probably know twice as much as most people
 - If you know how the two facts interrelate – you cannot be hushed

Getting me started (continued)

■ **Collaboration**

- When done well it basically refers to all processes where people work together — applying both to the work of individuals as well as organizations.
- Collaboration is very hard to pull off
 - If you have courage and you get started
 - If you have commitment and keep on pushing
 - You have a chance to collaborate

Once you start me up

- But that's just me and my personal experience
- So, I did a literature review on Google and found – not much...
- What I did find was a little surprising
- The top three sites that came up were:
 - Barriers to Coalition Building & Strategies to Overcome Them
 - How-to Guide to Coalition Building
 - A Guide to Coalition Building
- Pretty good I thought, but...

Top Three Internet Sites

- **Barriers to Coalition Building & Strategies to Overcome Them**
 - Area Health Education Center (AHEC) – Medical College of Georgia - A program responds to the problems of health professionals supply and distribution in rural areas of Georgia

- **“How- to” Guide to Coalition Building**
 - Campaign Safe & Sober
 - Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Government - Silver Spring, MD

- **A Guide to Coalition Building**
 - Cypress Consulting of Ottawa, Ontario
 - For the contact person it said: Janice Forsythe
Former Executive Director Canadian Council on Smoking and Health

Back to the Basics

So, I decided to go back to the basics:

- **Saul Alinsky – Reveille for Radicals & Rules for Radicals**
- **Eugene Debs – Agitation and Agitators**
- **Mary Harris “Mother” Jones - The Miners' Angel**
- **Mahatma Ghandi, Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth**
- **Michael Harrington – The Other America**
- **Heuy Newton – To Die for the People**
- **Nelson Mandela – Long Walk to Freedom**

New Day – New Ideas

**In doing this search and review,
I discovered several things about myself**

- **I realized where many of my ideas came from**
- **I realized most of the sources from my bookshelf were (let's say... dated)**
- **I also realized there was not a lot of new and creative information about organizing and coalition building**

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

- **I did not want to be “old fashioned” – so I did what any reasonable person would do:**
 - I headed to Barnes and Noble
 - Of course, I searched for a while thinking I could find what I was looking for
 - Then I asked for help

- **I asked an employee to look up Rules for Radicals**
 - I thought I would get directions to where that book was and go there to find all the community organizing books
 - **WRONG!**
 - **Verification – “Wow, that’s an old book. No, we don’t have any copies**
 - **I asked – What do you have under:**
 - Community Organizing (“Sorry sir” – nada)
 - Coalition Building (“Hmmm” – not much more)

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

- But wait – there is hope!
- In the business section I found three books that that caught my interest:
 - **The Wisdom of Crowds** by James Surowiecki
 - **Change the Way You See Everything**
by Kathryn Cramer and Hank Wasiak
 - **The Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook**
by David D. Chrislip

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

– The Wisdom of Crowds – by James Surowiecki

- a deceptively simple idea: Large groups of people are *smarter* than an elite few
- The idea really came out of how markets work
- A "crowd," in the sense used in the book, is any group of people who can act collectively to make decisions and solve problems
- Sounds Like A Coalition to Me!

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

- **Wisdom of Crowds** – (continued)

- He discovered that groups are usually smarter than individuals – no matter how smart the individuals are
 - Individuals usually have less information than they would like to have
 - They are sometimes motivated by emotions and personal preferences
 - They often settle for a method that is “good enough” vs. the best possible solution

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

Wisdom of Crowds (continued)

- Individuals are important because:
 - They keep the mistakes from wrecking the group's collective judgment
 - They are more likely to have new information rather than the same old data everyone already knows
- Smartest Groups are made up of:
 - Diverse and independent people
 - Even biased and irrational people (as long as they are independent) will not make the group dumber

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

- **Change the Way You See Everything by Kathryn Cramer and Hank Wasiak**
 - This is a grown up version of the **Norman Vincent Peale's Power of Positive Thinking**
 - This book is about AbT: Asset Based Thinking
 - AbT is a cognitive process that helps people identify assets (e.g. strengths, talents, synergies and possibilities)
 - According to the authors these assets are abundant in oneself, others and situations. Helps people be confident of themselves
 - Sounds like a skill I need considering some of the people I have worked with over the years!

**New Day – but not so New of an
Ideas**

Abe Lincoln once said

***"Most folks are about as happy as
they make up their minds to be."***

New Day – New Ideas (continued)

- **The Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook – by David D. Chrislip**

- Although this book is written for a business context it has some nuts and bolts that apply to coalitions
- I actually bought this book
- He calls it, “A guide for citizens and civic leaders.”
- Thinking back to Wisdom of Crowds, I thought this guy would have never gotten a subtitle (with the word “citizen”) in it - past the Param Principles working group
- But to his credit he talks (albeit he does it in a square and business sense way) about how to organize people in coalitions.

A Long Story Short

- I went through all of this because:
 - I had to satisfy myself that I was as current as possible
 - To refresh my own knowledge of what is what
- What I learned was:
 - There is not a lot of new info on coalition building available
 - That my experience was as valid as the next person
 - That I should use my knowledge and experience as the basis of my workshop

Why Start Up an Affordable Energy Coalition

- I've worked with others to create the Illinois Affordable Energy Campaign, so
- Tell me why you came to this workshop?

My thinking is this

- There is a systemic problem that is not being addressed (“and you are sick and tired of being sick and tired” Fannie Lou Hamer)
- You or someone else tries to get something started (you have to have passion)
- Stakeholders are identified and called together
- Issues are discussed/argued
- A process to determine possible solutions is established
- You come together to take action

There is a systemic problem that is not being addressed

- “Stupid is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result.” James Carville
- You think that a group of people could come up with alternatives to the problem
- You question your position and/or abilities to bring this about
- You think about the political dynamics and context

You or someone else tries to get something started

- **The original leadership has to decide on the issue of your credibility to convene the group**
- **The leadership has to understand and practice the principle of inclusion of partners**
- **A political leader calls a meeting to discuss the problem**
- **You call a colleague that sees the same problem**
- **You hear from a colleague that others are starting to meet and you decide to take part**
- **Your supervisor asks you to attend a meeting that others have called**
- **You and others commit and become involved**

Stakeholders are identified and called together

- At the initial and all subsequent meetings you brainstorm about who should be at the table:
 - Affected population
 - Service providers
 - Advocates
 - Policy makers and elected officials
 - Religious leaders
 - The business community
- You also discuss who should not be involved
- You call them together and begin a process

Issues are discussed/argued

- You discuss and agree on what the problem is
- You discuss and agree on why there is a problem and
- You discuss and agree on who will be your opposition
- The group may not agree on:
 - What the problem is
 - What should be done to solve the problem

Issues are discussed/argued (continued)

- I believe in a simple Zen concept that says, “**never underestimate the power of adversity as your teacher**”
- Everyone at the table has to understand that advocacy coalitions are conflict groups
- The main reason the group comes together at all is address the issue and to change the status quo
- To change the status quo an advocacy coalitions has to gain power
- When new groups gain power that becomes a threat to existing power structures
- The coalition has to understand this and anticipate you opposition

A process to determine possible solutions is established

- The group has to define the decision making method
 - Will the group have members and how does someone become one?
 - Who will be the leaders of the group and what are their responsibilities?
 - Will the majority rule?
 - Will decisions be made by consensus (minus 1 or 2)?
 - Will you follow Roberts Rules?
 - If it is a large group, who gets to vote?

A process to determine possible solutions is established

(continued)

- What are the ground rules?
 - Everyone gets an equal chance to speak
 - Anyone can disagree with anyone if it is done in a civil manner
 - The length of the meetings has to be established
 - Will there be an agenda and will minutes be taken

A process to determine possible solutions is established (continued)

- Information needs are established
 - What info needs to be gathered?
 - Who will gather what pieces of information?
 - If you need expertise, who will provide that?
 - Who will edit and layout the information?
 - Will everyone be expected to use the same information?
 - How will the information be made available to the members of the coalition?

A process to determine possible solutions is established (continued)

- Managing the process
 - Will you have a steering committee and if so who will be on that committee
 - Will the steering committee need a chairperson, co-chairs or no chairs?
 - Will member organizations be expected to contribute staff time and supplies to the cause?
 - Will there be a strategic analysis before decisions are made? SWOT
 - When decisions are made, how will members be included and notified?

You come together to take action

- When the coalition decides on taking action there is a need to reach out to a larger constituency
- Agreement needs to be reached as to how decision/policy makers will be approached:
 - Face to face meeting with information distributed
 - A letter to a policy maker requesting action
 - A demonstration in front of government building
 - Legislation drafted and introduced in a legislative body
- Reorganize if you do not succeed at first
- Celebrate your victories no matter how small