

# Setting Up An Activist Event

There are many types of events that engage and call people to action:

- Write and Run Parties
- Rallies/Issue based Coffees
- Phone Banks
- Canvasses

## **Write and Runs**

This type of event requires very little commitment from the audience you are trying to engage. Often times activists feel over extended and don't feel they have the necessary time to get involved to level they would like. Setting up a write and run can be time intensive for the organizer but allows the organizer to engage a wide number of a target audience and create both action and awareness of a specific issue. It is a convenient way for activists to take action on the go and head to their next appointment!

## **Rallies/Issue Based Coffees**

This type of event is typically implemented to create awareness and provide education on an issue. They can be effective methods of communicating with a legislator if you can draw a large enough crowd. You can do this in one of two ways: Invite your target legislator and/or Invite media that will cover the event. Legislators are always looking for ways to engage the maximum amount of people with the least amount of effort. The media will over cover an event that they deem 'news worthy' so turnout matters on both fronts. Information and dialogue should be available at both these events. A coffee is a low key method and should be used as intimate setting to educate and discuss specific issues. Rallies are used to create awareness, foster dialogue, and create community of activists.

## **Phone Banks**

Phone Banks are used to get the word out and are a method of both recruiting new activists and engaging old activists. You'll want to work with an organization that can supply a list of phone numbers of audiences that 'should' be receptive to your message (i.e. you don't want to just start randomly calling people in your local phone listings) You can also phone people in your and other activist personal social networks. These are typically referred to as friend to friend calls or neighbor to neighbor calls. These can be effective but keep in mind some 'friends' may not be receptive to your message and may create a hostile environment.

## Canvass

Canvasses, similar to phone banks, are used to get the word out and can be used for new and old recruitment as well. These events will require a lot more commitment from your activists and should be done after you have engaged your activists on a couple of levels (e.g. write and run, canvasses). A successful canvass can be VERY effective. There is nothing more convincing than a person at your front door appealing to your sense of fairness.

### Getting Ready For the Big Day

The prep work is simple. Choose the location, date, a wide window of time to accommodate the maximum amount activists, and spread the word. Choosing a location should be simple. Look for free locations (e.g. libraries, community centers, churches, a large home). You want to choose a location that is easily accessible, has parking, and will accommodate as many people as you anticipate at your event. When choosing a date it should be one with as few conflicts as possible (i.e. do not pick a date that coincides with a holiday or major community event that appeals to the same audience you are trying to reach). The necessity of a wide window of time! Choose a block of time (e.g. 5-9pm). Remember today's activists are busy people. They are going to need a wide window of time to pop in, take action, have a quick convo with other like minded people, and find out how they can get involved again. Spreading the word about your event will ensure success. Success is measured in many ways, yes! But you want to try and reach as many people as possible. If you flyer at grocery stores, libraries, parks and EL/Metra stops you will find people who you might never have reached otherwise. Once you have done all the above you are ready to host your write and run.

You will also want to prepare all documents necessary for desired action at event. For example, if you are running a neighbor to neighbor phone bank you will want a script, instructions and a data collection sheet for your activists. You will also want to prepare a flyer for your next event.

### The Big Day

You'll want to be very clear as to the time and location of your event. You'll need to show up in advance to organizer and prepare the event. When the activists arrive everything should be setup to run smoothly. If the activists are engaged the entire time they are there and don't feel as if things are being managed properly you will lose them. Their time is valuable and they want to be engaged the entire event. You'll want to have drinks and/or munchies. Remember your activists are **volunteers**. While they are committed to the issue some type of gratitude is **never** overlooked. That said you can **never** say THANK YOU enough! Once you have set things up and prepared the days activities for your attendees you are all set. Make sure you speak to as many attendees as possible trying to remember faces and names. If you can remember someone's name it is always appreciated as they feel their contribution is being at the very least recognized. At the end of your event all attendees should know when your next event is happening and where they can sign up!