

Campaign Strategy

About this resource:

This is a resource on key topics that form Campaign Strategy specifically for campus fossil fuel divestment campaigns, though many of the concepts are widely applicable.

This resource was adapted and formatted by Alyssa Lee <alyssa@betterfutureproject.org> at Better Future Project/Divest Ed. Much of the language and concepts come from decades of organizing work that far precedes BFP. The particular language used here largely comes from the Divestment Student Network and Sierra Student Coalition. It was last updated on [2018-04-07](#).

[What is a Campaign?](#)

[Theory of Change](#)

[Spectrum of Support](#)

[Power Mapping](#)

[Targets](#)

[How do you choose a target?](#)

[Researching your Target](#)

[Target Mapping](#)

[What is Strategy?](#)

[Tactics](#)

[Qualities of Great Tactics](#)

[Sequencing Tactics](#)

[Timeline-Setting and Backwards Planning](#)

[Goal-Setting](#)

[Act-Absorb-Train Cycle](#)

What is a Campaign?

A campaign is a connected series of operations designed to bring about a particular result. It is composed of the the following:

- ★ **Vision:** The vision is idea of what you want the world to be. It is based on values and is less specific than the goal.
- ★ **Goal:** The campaign goal is the concrete outcome you want to achieve that will contribute to your vision. The goal is not the same thing as your campaign ‘ask’ but is often very connected.
- ★ **Target:** A target is the person(s) who has the authority or decision-making power to give you what you want (i.e. grant you your ask).
- ★ **Ask:** The ask is what you are asking your target to do. It is very similar to the goal.
- ★ **Time-bound:** A campaign is time-bound meaning it has a deadline. This means you know when you have achieved your campaign goal.
- ★ **Strategy:** A strategy is a deliberate sequence of tactics to achieve to your goal.
- ★ **Tactic:** A tactic is any action you take to get toward your goal.

EXAMPLE: “Divest UMass” Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign

- ★ **Vision:** A world whose energy sources are renewable and community-owned, not extractive or harmful. A society in which students use their power to challenge their institutions to be a force for positive good rather than contributing to economic and climate violence
- ★ **Goal:** Get the UMass system to divest their endowment from the top 200 publicly traded fossil-fuel companies.
- ★ **Target:** President Meehan and Chairman Woolridge
- ★ **Ask:** Get the Board of Trustees to vote ‘yes’ at the next Board meeting to divesting the UMass system’s endowment from the top 200 publicly traded fossil-fuel companies; this means instituting a policy that would immediately implement a negative screen on those fossil fuel companies and then phasing out all existing fossil fuel investments over the next 3-5 years.
- ★ **Time-bound:** By end of Spring 2016

Theory of Change

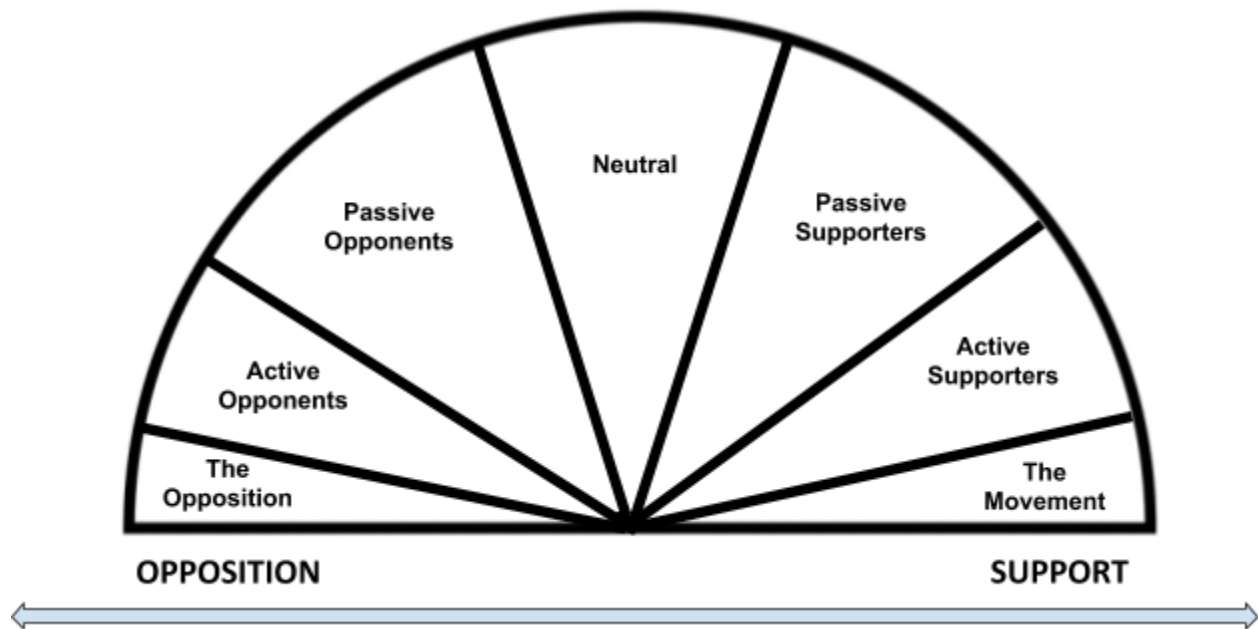
A Theory of Change is how you believe that you will make change. It’s what explains how your Goal gets you closer to your Vision. It is best summed up as an “*If X, then Y*” statement. The following are examples of theories of change for divestment:

- *If we divest, then* the fossil fuel industry will be delegitimized and seen as a force of injustice.
- *If we divest, then* fossil fuel companies will be weakened politically and thus economically.
- *If we divest, then* students will feel empowered to keep fighting for other social justice issues.
- *If our university divests, then* other institutions will follow and it will no longer be politically acceptable for politicians to campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies.

Theories of change can also happen at multiple levels.

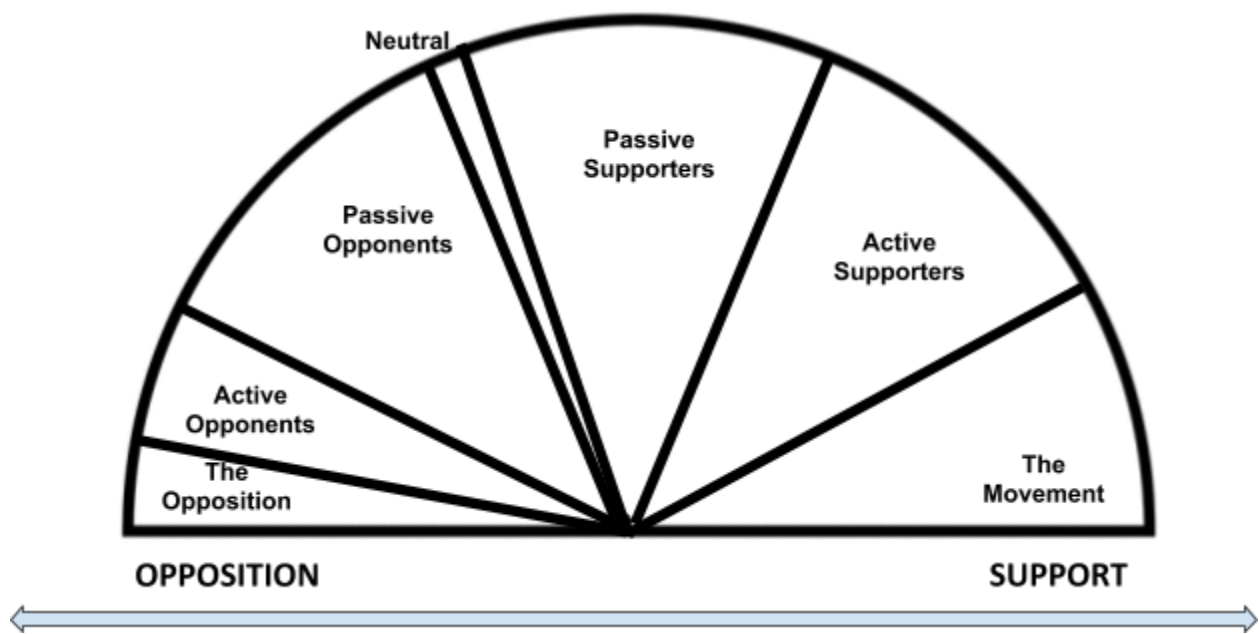
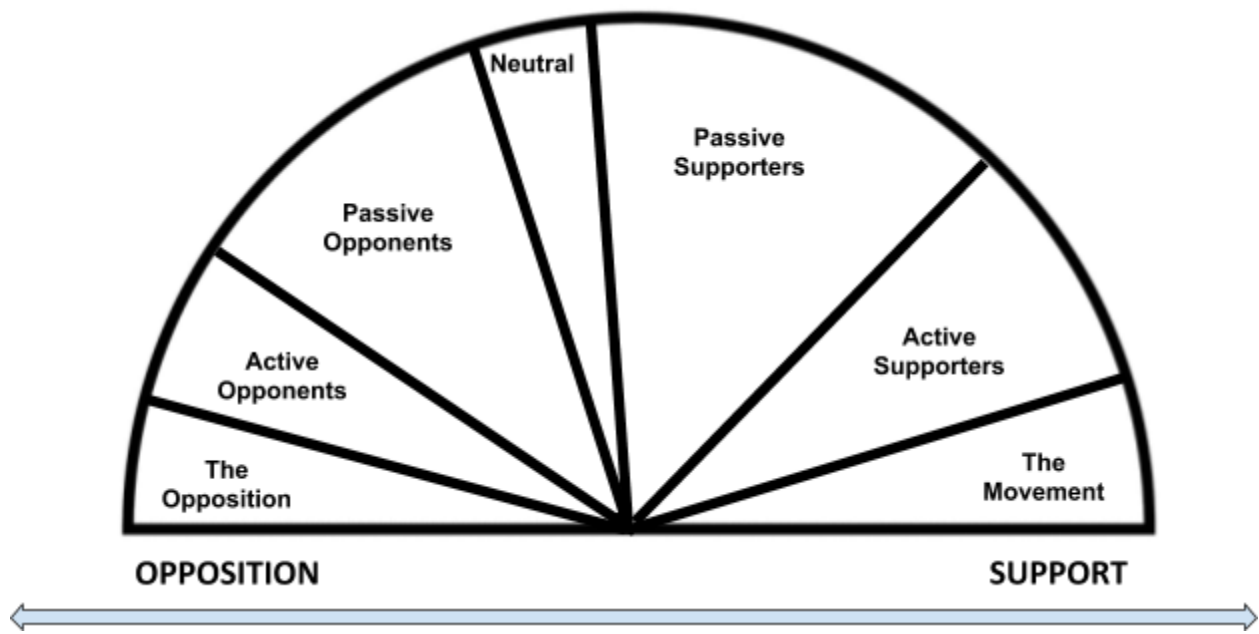
- 1) *If we organize enough students to demand divestment, then* our universities will have no choice but to divest. →
- 2) *If enough campuses divest from the fossil fuel industry, then* public opinion will shift against the fossil fuel industry. →
- 3) *If public opinion shifts away from support of the fossil fuel industry, then* the fossil fuel industry will not be as powerful, and we can build a more just future.

Spectrum of Support



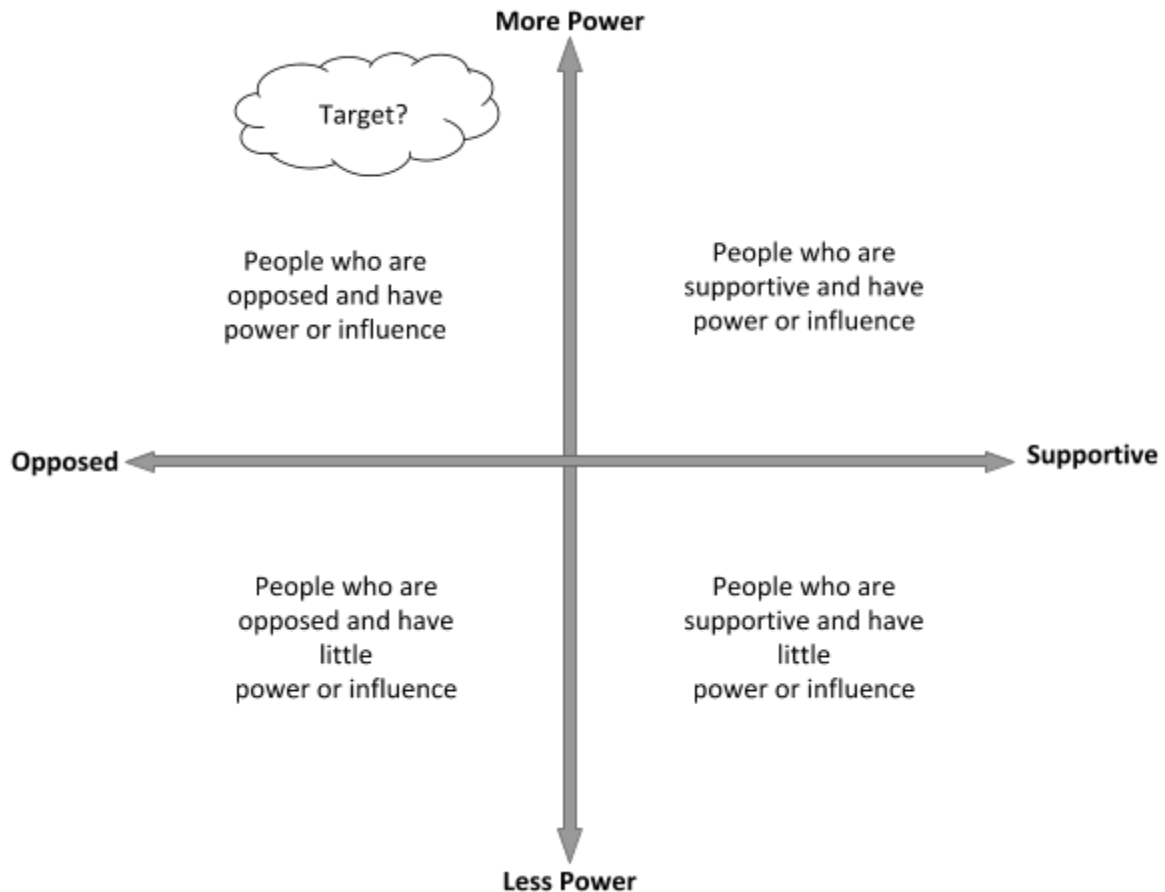
- Passive Supporters & Passive Opponents: They agree or disagree with doing something about the issue, passive supporters would respond “yes” to someone asking if they support taking action for climate justice, but they’re not being moved into action yet. We need a majority of passive supporters to win!
- Active Supporters & Active Opponents: People who are taking action on this issue, they are the people marching in the People’s Climate March, showing up to the escalation on your campus, refusing to vote for climate deniers, donating to divestment campaigns and climate groups like 350.org. We need a critical mass of active supporters who are taking action, voting, donating, on the issue of climate justice!
- The Movement (& The Opposition): People who are joining movement organizations to make change on this issue, or joining the opposition’s groups to maintain the status quo. This is students inside Bowdoin Climate Action, members of 350.org and for the opposition, it’s the fossil fuel industry and people who work at orgs like the American Petroleum Institute. We need a movement that is strong and sustained enough to shift the whole spectrum to our side!
- Neutrals: People who are not engaged on the issue. They either don’t know that there is an issue, they don’t know anything about it, or they don’t yet have an opinion on it. They might be confused about the rhetoric and thus not engaging.

NOTE: The Spectrum of Support can be on both an interpersonal and institutional level but also movement-wide. Think about the People’s Climate March and the impact that had on the climate movement spectrum of support.



Power Mapping

A Power Map is a way to assess how much power different players in the spectrum have. The idea is to place people on this grid between whether they have more or less power and whether they are opposed to you or supportive of you.



Targets

Look back at the Divest UMass example. What do you notice about UMass's target?

- Specific individual people with names
- Decision-makers, hold influential positions
- NOT the same as the "enemy," such as Exxon or Chevron - Someone who we can actually affect

How do you choose a target?

- How much influence do they have? (over others, in the decision)
- How much symbolic value do they have?
- How likely are they to grant you your ask?
- How much access to them do you have?

NOTE: You may not have a target that fulfills all of these.

For campus divestment campaigns, the target is usually the Board of Trustees Investment Committee members, the school's President/Chancellor, the Investment Manager, or the Chief Investment Officer. There are many individual decision-makers at play, and it will look different for each campus.

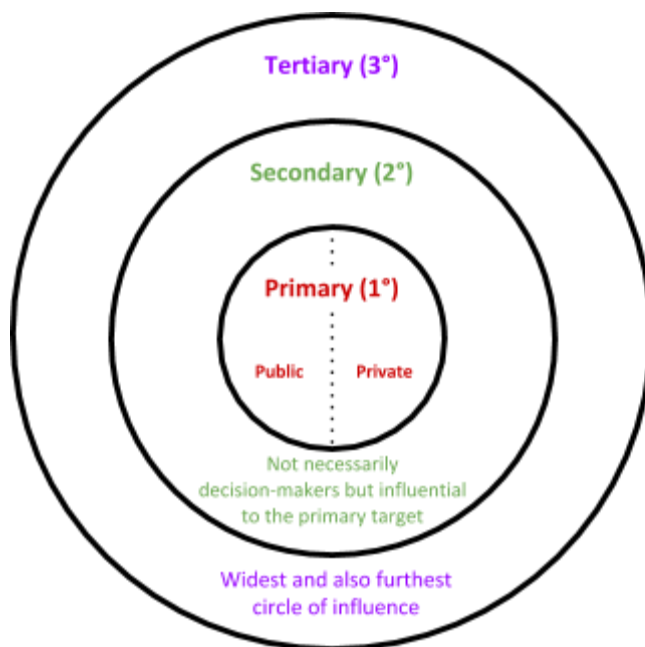
Researching your Target

It's not just about WHO but about leverage.

- What do they care about?
- What will your victory cost them?
- What will they do/spend to oppose you? At what point?
- How strong are they?

Target Mapping

Every target has people who influence their decisions. Most decision makers have a small circle of people close to them that have influence over them. *Target Mapping* is a tool to help you see what your access to your target is.

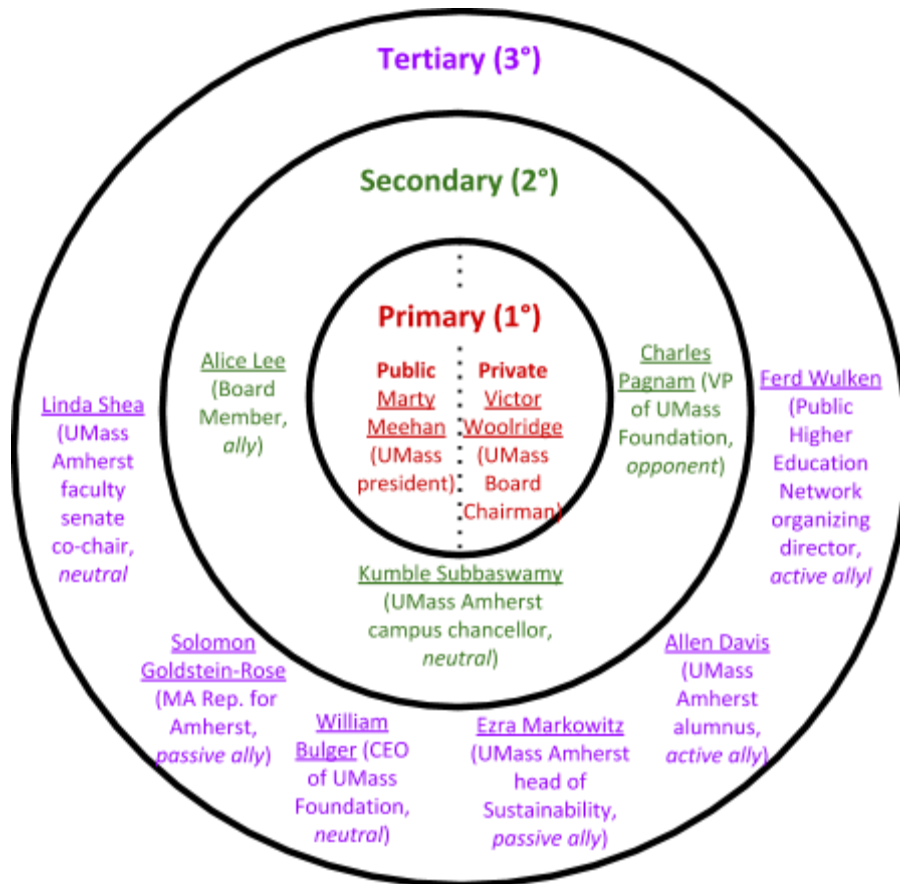


Primary (1°): This is the campaign target. They are the ultimate decision-maker who can give you what you want, i.e. if this person says 'Yes,' then you have achieved your campaign goal.

Secondary (2°): People who can directly influence or have access to the Primary Target. You can often have more access to and influence on a Secondary Target. If you can't directly get the Primary Target to change their position, you can pressure Secondary Targets to influence them to make a decision in our favor. Smart campaigners direct at least some of the campaign activity to a well-chosen Secondary Target.

Tertiary (3°): These people probably don't have directly influence over the Primary Target, but they do have influence on the Secondary Targets and can be helpful in your campaign.

Example - Divest UMass Campaign Target Map:



Notes:

- It is critical to get specific. Name individual people or positions. When you can't do that, name specific groups, committees, or bodies.
- Keep in mind that choosing a target is HARD, especially when it has to get specific. It may be one of the more difficult parts of a campaign strategy process.
- The Primary Target that campaigns initially choose is often the most politically influential or most powerful person. However, as the campaign goes on, you may find out that this person is not an actual decision-maker for your campaign goal. That is okay. This tool is helpful to help identify where you need to do more research.

What is Strategy?

Strategy is like the firm foundation that your campaign is built upon, and your **tactics** are the bricks you lay on top of it, reaching ever higher toward your goal.

Tactics

Definition of Tactic: An individual action or activity your campaign takes that gets you closer to achieving your goal. Essentially, tactics get work done, demonstrate power to your target, and get you closer to achieving your goal.

Examples of campaign tactics:

- Collecting petition signatures
- Making phone calls to a target
- Rallies
- Marches
- Documentary screenings
- A press conference
- Writing reports
- Tabling
- Class announcements

Qualities of Great Tactics

Great tactics fulfill the following criteria:

1. **Apply Pressure**
2. **Build Power**
3. **Build Leaders**

Apply Pressure

A tactic applies pressure when it fits with your campaign strategy for demonstrating power to your Target.

Builds Power

A tactic builds power when it engages more people in your campaign, growing your base of supporters and active volunteers.

Some common ways to build power in a tactic are:

- have people sign a petition or an interest list with their contact info,
- advertise your next campaign meeting during an action,
- get media to raise visibility to people who didn't know about your campaign,
- hold your tactic in a central location where new people are likely to walk by - have them sign up

Remember: In order for your tactics to build power, they must be effective in keeping people around who are already involved. To do this, your tactics must be fun, creative, or meaningful.

Builds Leaders

A tactic builds leaders when it offers opportunities for new people to step up into temporary or permanent leadership roles to make it happen.

This requires creating different types of leadership roles for a tactic that fit people with different skills and different levels of experience in the campaign, and then asking folks if they will take them on. This will also make your life easier and increase the possibilities for your tactics.

Some other good questions to ask yourself when designing a tactic are:

- Will it affect the outcome?
- Is it tailored to your strengths?
- Does it build leadership/organizational capacity?
- Which tactics will make it harder for your target to ignore your demands?
- Is it creative?
- Will it increase your credibility with your target AND/OR your public audience?
- Will it get you added visibility?

Sequencing Tactics

The order that tactics come in a campaign contributes greatly to their impact. Tactics should be consistent while also building off of each other, getting larger, and applying more and more pressure! **Escalation** of tactics means that tactics should demonstrate more power and pressure to your target over time.

Timeline-Setting and Backwards Planning

Why use a timeline? To know if you can fit all your tactics in by the time you want to reach your goal AND to design an order to put them in.

What is backwards planning? What will it actually take to get the Board to divest? Think about that moment, then plan backwards from there.

Why should you plan backwards? Planning backwards ensures that the way we build power is affecting an outcome we actually want, and it ensures that our sequence of tactics is strategic and considers escalation.

Steps for planning backwards:

1. Divide overall task/goal/campaign/etc. into “realms.” For example, a goal of putting on a major direct action would have the realms of: planning, outreach, gaining commitment, action, and absorption.
2. Identify end goals for each realm. Answer the sentence, “By the end of this realm, we want to have done or achieved X, Y, and Z.”
3. Think about the next-to-last step that will need to be finished to meet each realm’s goal and *by when* it needs to be done.
4. Decide what needs to be done to get to that step and how long it will take.
5. Continue until you have broken all your goals down into a series of manageable steps.

Be Flexible.

It’s important to leave room for events outside of your control (holidays, other big events, weather) so that you can catch conflicts/problems in advance. And remember, this is unpredictable work. You will never be sure what will work!

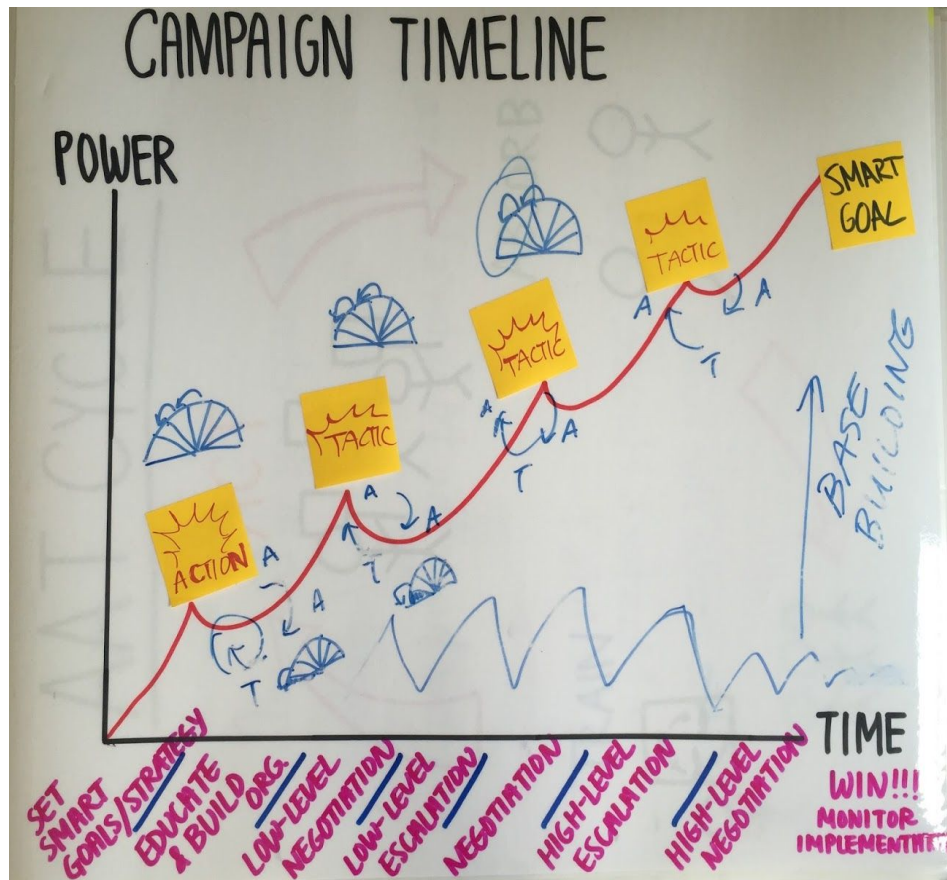
Goal-Setting

A “S.M.A.R.T. goal” is a goal that is...

- **S**pecific and **S**trategic (helps get you toward your campaign goal)
- **M**easurable (you can determine when/how you’ve achieved it)
- **A**ccountable (someone is responsible for it) and **A**ctivating (gets people to do something)
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound (has a deadline)

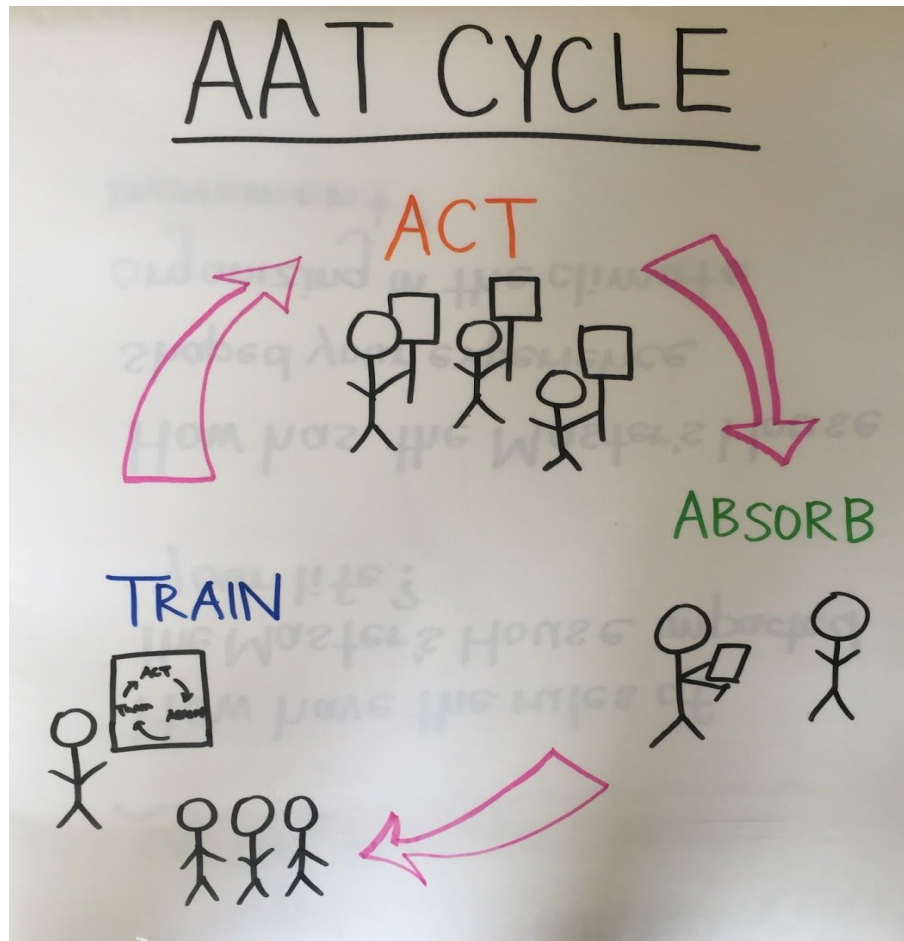
Remember backwards planning! Envisioning your campaign win, work backwards to set SMART goals that put pressure on your targets and display increasing levels of social power.

Timeline of Campaign



- We want to be building power over time, increasing power with each tactic, and constantly moving the spectrum.
- There are peaks and dips after peaks but always trying to be higher than where you started (either higher in numbers or visibility or tone escalation)

Act-Absorb-Train Cycle



- We ACT and mobilize passive support into active support at key moments
- We ABSORB new support into our movement.
- We TRAIN both new and old members to move them up a ladder of engagement (and in order to get into more escalated territory)
- Ultimately, the AAT is about building up our base and our Movement. This constant base building looks like a cycle that we use all throughout the timeline of a campaign.