

# 6 EVIDENCE-BASED INSIGHTS FOR RELATIONAL ORGANIZING



## RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY TO KEEPING PEOPLE ENGAGED AND READY TO TAKE ACTION

Whether it's asking a family member to join a town hall meeting or an organizational supporter to sign a petition, having a strong personal relationship with your audience increases the likelihood of that person to take action. **One study of voter engagement** found that when a person was asked to vote by someone they knew, the likelihood of them voting increased by up to 8.3 percentage points. This is because, in comparison to interactions with strangers, familiar relationships provide better opportunities for contact. The bonus is that once people take one action, they are more likely to take on additional actions.

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

"Join ABC organization at this town hall meeting to oppose the pipeline construction in XYZ neighborhood."

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

"Hey Auntie A, I know you care about your community and the people around you. ABC organization will be joining the efforts to oppose the pipeline in XYZ neighborhood. I really care about this issue and our voices matter. Please join us at the next town hall meeting."



## DEVELOPING A RELATIONAL ORGANIZING STRATEGY TAKES TIME

When you are thinking about developing a relational organizing strategy for your campaign, **START EARLY**. Like any good organizing strategy, relational organizing requires dedication. For instance, you need to decide early on who are the people you want to be engaging, how frequently, and what the asks are. Check out **the Lab's worksheet on designing a relational organizing program** for even more guidance.

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

Adding in a relational organizing program halfway through your campaign because you heard it could be useful.

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

From the onset of your planning, think through how you can leverage different relationships you may have with people and how everyone in your organization can be involved. It takes a village!



## A VARIETY OF RELATIONAL ORGANIZING APPROACHES IS THE SPICE OF LIFE!

There are a number of relational organizing approaches available for organizers, each with their own strengths. This is because different people and communities respond to different types of tactics, whether that's digital engagement or in-person contact. What may work in community X may flop in community Y, so switch it up! **Test different approaches** as part of your due diligence to see what method works best for the community you are working with.

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

Only utilizing email and Facebook groups to contact your network because that's what you're used to doing.

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

Testing different approaches like Facebook, texting, street teams, and 1-on-1s based on what you know (or think you know) about your audience.



## RELATIONAL ORGANIZING IS POWER-BUILDING

Power-building is about growing your **base of supporters** and using that energy and momentum to make change. Relational organizing can be a big part of that process given that you are utilizing the relationships you already have with people to further grow those connections. When engaging in relational organizing, ensure that you develop ways in which people can move up a ladder of engagement, develop their leadership in the movement, and bring in additional capacity from their networks. Retention through **building and reinforcing your audience's activist identity** is key.

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

Asking someone to take action once with no further engagement.

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

Asking someone to take an action, then providing different ways that person can stay involved and ways they can take on leadership (e.g., organizing a phonebanking session).



## 1-ON-1S ARE ABOUT CREATING LONG-LASTING, TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

1-on-1s are one of the most fundamental aspects of organizing, which means it is important they are done properly. 1-on-1s can build new relationships and strengthen existing ones. When engaging in a 1-on-1, ensure you ask clarifying questions to better understand your subject, leave the door open for additional conversations, you have a clear ask (if applicable), you practice non-judgment, you model vulnerability, and you listen actively.

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

Requesting a 1-on-1 conversation with your friend and just making small talk without connecting on your issue, or alternatively asking non-stop questions like it's an interview.

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

Requesting a 1-on-1 with your friend and talking with them about their anxiety around climate change, ways they can get involved with the work you do, and how you also have anxiety around the climate crisis. Then ask them to sign a petition to oppose a proposed local pipeline because their voice matters and demonstrates community power.



## RELATIONAL ORGANIZING AND CULTURAL ORGANIZING CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE TOGETHER

The 5 Cs for cultural organizing are Culture, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, and Community. Similar to relational organizing, cultural organizing provides **a different perspective** on the work of campaigning and provides opportunities for people with different skillsets to get involved. Cultural organizing is a strategy to shift cultural norms away from the dominant culture (e.g., shifting from false solutions to community-centered solutions), which aligns with relational organizing's focus on raising up people power as a viable solution for change. Further, using cultural and relational organizing can allow you to be more strategic by tapping into your existing networks. Plus, it can be fun for everyone!

### INSTEAD OF THIS:

Hosting a rally in front of an elected official's office in opposition of a proposed pipeline in a low-income neighborhood.

### TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

Hosting a birthday party for an elected official to demand they oppose a proposed pipeline in a low-income neighborhood.

