

PLANNING A WINNING CAMPAIGN

A campaign is a long-term plan of action focused on one particular issue.

Perhaps you discover a monkey on permanent display in a cage at a hardware store, or find out that students at local high schools don't have vegan options in their school. You might learn that a facility in your town breeds animals for use in painful research or that your local health food store is selling factory farmed animals or that they are trying to build a slaughterhouse or factory farm in your town. Whatever the issue, your campaign begins when you see a specific problem of animal abuse in your area and you decide you want to begin a serious, sustained effort to end the cruelty.

It is important to remember that campaigns can take a long time to win – sometimes years. A campaign must focus on an issue that will motivate you and the people in your group enough to see the campaign through to a successful conclusion.

There are differences between short-term campaigns and long-term campaigns. Many short-term campaigns can fit into a larger long-term campaign. Example: getting vegan meals in your local restaurants or school helps the long-term campaign on veganism; getting one animal experiment stopped one animal experimentation lab fits into a long-term campaign about vivisection.

It is important when starting any campaign to decide your focus. Spreading the word about veganism and factory farming might need more one-on-one time with the public. Your time and energy might be spent tabling at festivals, downtown or leafleting at colleges and at busy bus/public transportation stops.

(Since veganism was just mentioned, it is important to note that with this issue there are many possibilities on long-term and short-term campaigns you can do. Getting vegan meals in your school or nearby schools serves a short-term and long-term purpose. If you are interested in getting more information on how to do this or if you want to get involved in campaigns on this issue with Viva!, please contact us!).

Unfortunately, it is easy to get so caught up in doing something that we sometimes forget why it is being done. If you decide you want to protest your target, ask yourself: Are we here to irritate our target, make them uncomfortable, or are we out here to get the public to see what these people are responsible for and get people to call and/or write them?

You might use both tactics for each campaign, but what you do in front of the target might be different. Chanting and using a megaphone might work to interfere with your target's work day. However, doing the same action might not serve to allow you to speak with passerby's or others who work in the building. Both are great tactics; you just need to decide what your focus is before you go out.

When planning a campaign, ask yourself the following questions: Will there be public sympathy? Is public sympathy important for achieving our goal? Your concern over public opinion does not mean you should not take on an unpopular issue; it just means you need to be prepared for backlash and gear your tactics appropriately. Think about whom you might make angry or impact the

most, and come up with ways to counter their arguments and actions.

Is the goal realistic? Some goals may not seem realistic, but with enough research and hard work, they might be able to be achieved. A few years ago, it may not have seemed possible to get a ban against animal circuses in cities. Now this is something groups around the country are working on and have had success with. Circumstances and public opinion can change and do change.

Do you have the resources at hand to give the campaign a really good chance of success? If not, can you acquire them? Having enough people, energy and even money can make difference. You may not get everything you want, but you can usually get what you need. With a concrete idea and plan, it will be easier to obtain advice and financial assistance from activists and national animal rights organizations.

After you have picked your campaign you need people!

To run a successful campaign, you really need to have a few dedicated individuals; even a small group can get a lot accomplished.

Once you have an issue, you need a plan.

First, you should identify who has the power to make the changes you want. Is it one individual, such as the mayor or the president of a corporation? Or does the important decision rest with an institution, such as a government agency? Your campaign should focus on influencing the decision maker(s) you identify. Start with something small, such as writing a letter (for example, you might ask the State's Fish and Game Department to stop allowing hunting on public lands). You may know their response, but you are creating a paper trail and providing that you have gone through the normal channels to create the change you desire. Try to get everything in writing and remember to keep any communication between you and your target. (Example: Grimaud Farms, a duck company investigated by Viva!, sent us a letter telling us they had seen our video and that the footage was obtain illegally from their farm. Later, Whole Foods tried to tell us that the video probably did not come from Grimaud Farms. Luckily we had a letter to prove Grimaud had confirmed it).

If you have a phone conversation, be sure to note the full name of the person you are speaking to, the date and time of your call, and any pertinent information exchanged.

Also write letters to local public officials and congressional representatives. State your issue, your demands and alternatives. Be clear about what you are asking your public officials to do. You might want to meet with some of your elected officials. See if you can enlist their support.

If your campaign requires research (from example, getting documentation on the how large your county's farmed animal population currently is and how dramatically it will be increased if more farms are allowed in, have residents complained, or when an experiment began, who gave it approval), keep copies of everything that supports your cause. These will be useful if you decide to print materials to distribute to the public or the

media. It is especially important for you to keep the information organized!

Depending on what campaign you are working on, conducting field research is a great way to get valuable information on your target. If you are trying to get horse-drawn carriages banned from your city, spend time videotaping the conditions of the horses. How often do they receive water? Do they have sores? It is always a good idea when monitoring animals, either in the circus or carriage trade, to note the temperature. Also, note the proximity between the animals and the public. Keep careful notes about your observations, including the date, time, location and description of events and who is involved.

With horse-drawn carriages, be sure to note traffic problems, carriages slowly going through red lights, slowed traffic, etc.

For all campaigns dealing with live animals, check to see if there are any ordinances to protect the animals and who is in charge of enforcing these laws. Although the Animal Welfare Act does not do an adequate job of protecting animals forced to perform in circuses and does NOT cover animals who are raised and killed for food, it is a good idea to become familiar with this act in terms of your campaign. If you see a violation, be sure to contact your local Animal Control department and/or the United States Department of Agriculture to file a complaint. (Unfortunately, this may or may not make a big difference, but it will be recorded – say in the circus's file, which is public record and could help other activists know what to look out for when the circus comes to town). You also want to keep an eye out for anything that could be used against your target (for example, water used to clean excrement from cages that is subsequently washed into city drains that lead into the river).

When you have gathered your information, write a fact sheet about what you have discovered. This will be something you can give to the public and the media. Try to make your video footage available for the media to view.

Before you go public, it is a good idea to get expert opinions to support your campaign. This will lend credibility to your cause and help convince the general public and government officials that action needs to

be taken. Approach scientists, veterinarians or any others who have relevant experience and inform them of the situation. See if they will write a critique (criticizing your target) and recommend alternatives. You might want to find someone local if you think you will need him or her throughout the campaign. These are a number of professional animal rights associations, such as the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) and the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), that help activists on animal rights issues.

Pass out leaflets and set up information tables to inform the community and to gain public sympathy. You might circulate a petition or letter for people to sign to send to your target's decision makers.

Try to have local newspaper reporters or other interested media do a story. Issue a news release and call the editor of the local paper.

Try to get support from other groups that might be able to assist you. For example, if you are working on trying to stop a factory farm from entering your community, you might want to contact the local environmental groups such as the Sierra Club; if you are working on horse drawn carriages, you might contact people who work on horse issues.

Keeping people motivated over the long haul is the real challenge. One of the best ways to keep energy going for a campaign is to have a lot of different ideas on tactics which the campaign can use. It is extremely helpful to brainstorm on different ways to pressure your target. For example, if you are targeting a local vivisector, find out where he/she works and organize an office demonstration or candlelight vigil. Perhaps you can find out where that person will be giving a speech, attending a conference or receiving an award, and you can be there to speak out for the animals. Brainstorming with a group is extremely useful. People can come up with some pretty wild ideas, but by discussing them together you can often come up with something achievable.

If your initial polite steps to affect change fail, your organization may need to increase the pressure. You may have already planned for an escalation if you were sure of your target's position (factory farms won't read a letter and decide to move somewhere

else). Escalation tactics include protests, candlelight vigils, boycotts, marches, and sometimes civil disobedience.

Public support and sympathy are always helpful. However, keep in mind that many victories for animals are accomplished without the need for media or the public to be involved.

For those seemingly resistant targets, persistence and creativity are a few of the keys that should be used.

Remember, even after you escalate the campaign, you need to continue with your other activities. All of your various activities will work together to make sure you attain your goal for the animals.

To summarize, review the following checklist when you get started with your campaign.

Ten Essential Points for a Successful Campaign

1. Identify which authority figures to target (stores, the public, politicians, CEOs, government agencies, etc).
2. Get everything in writing at all stages of the campaign and document all interactions.
3. Notify your state and congressional representatives of your efforts. Enlist support.
4. Do any necessary background research.
5. Prepare fact sheets or other relevant literature for distribution to the public.
6. Solicit expert opinions to back up your facts.
7. Notify the media.
8. Distribute your fact sheets and documentation to the public (tabling and leafleting).
9. Enlist support from other animal advocacy organizations.
10. Continue to brainstorm and keep the campaign going strong.

For more assistance, information, literature and other campaign materials contact:

Viva! P.O. Box 4398 Davis, CA 95617 530/759-8482

www.vivausa.org info@vivausa.org ACT@vivausa.org (for teens)

The logo for Viva! is written in a large, bold, black, cursive-style font. The word "Viva!" is slanted upwards to the right, with a large exclamation point at the end.