



Grassroots 101: Organizing a Rally

AMPLIFY
YOUR VOICE!

Overview:

Public rallies are peaceful, energetic, passionate, and meaningful way for the community to unite and raise awareness about a particular concern or issue. A well-organized rally or march communicates a movement's message clearly and accurately to the intended recipients and the broader public. They are the means to assert empowerment and to influence decision makers. It is one of many organizing tools at our disposal and incorporates other tools like petition gathering, storytelling, generating media, and building partnerships.

Goal/Objectives:

- Raise public awareness.
- Capture attention of targeted decision makers.
- Earned media.
- Build community partnerships and engaged community members.

Time Required: Ideally 2 months, but can pull it off in 4- 5 weeks.

Resources Needed:

- Committed organizing team with specific roles and responsibilities.
- Budget to pay for rental equipment, musicians, permits, venue rental, etc.
- Time line with some flexibility.
- Outreach/promotional game plan and materials.
- Equipment: AV/Sound system (bull horn at the minimum), stage, canopy (if outdoors), banners, signs.

Steps

- Determine **WHY** are you organizing the rally and how will you measure success?
- Determine **WHO** are the people involved on the rally organizing team and make sure it is inclusive. Who will definitely come who needs to be reached out to.
- Determine **WHO** are the decision makers or targets?
- Determine **WHEN** is the best time. *During the day or in the evening? Week day or weekend? Before an important public meeting?*



- Determine **WHERE** is the best place to get at your objectives in the **Why and the Who** discussion. You may have to research venue options. *Is the venue indoors or outdoors? Does it cost money? Is it easily accessible? Will it accommodate audience numbers? Does it need a permit from city or police? Does it have the resources you need, i.e. stage, AV/sound, canopy, and electricity if outdoors?*
- Determine a goal for number of participants.
- Identify roles and responsibilities to:
 - Outreach to those interested in the issue (local elected, student groups, non-profit, labor, unions etc.) to attend rally. Email followed by phone call.
 - Secure venue, permits, AV sound system, stage, a few chairs, and canopy (if outside)
 - Send media outlets press advisory 3-5 days before event, including TV, radio, newspapers (see how to link below).
 - Secure a diverse, prominent, and charismatic slate of speakers (4 speakers max) who will add credibility, connect the issue impacting them, and help sell rally to media.
 - Spread the word! Create and dispense promotional materials as soon as possible to provide ample time for distribution, i.e. email text, social media posts, FB event page (just one though), posters. Paid ads too if you have it in the budget.
 - Set up RSVP system to use in your outreach and promotional materials. Then monitor RSVPs- are your reaching your goal? Send reminder to RSVPs about the event 1-2 days before hand.
 - Make colorful signs, banners, stickers.
 - Secure musician or two as live music makes for a fun rally.
- Determine day of event roles: Set up and break down team (5-8), emcee (1), speaker handler (1), media liaison to send out press release that morning, make follow up calls and direct reports to key spokespeople (1), crowd control who are easily identifiable (4-6), police liaison (1), petition/postcard gatherers with handouts (5-10 depending on crowd size), staff an info table (4-6), photographer/filmer (1-2), social media point person (2).
- Create a day of tic toc with breakdown of what happens when and who does what. Make sure everyone has this.

Follow-up

- Thank you card to the emcee and speakers.
- Follow up with media reporters and share articles with decision makers.
- Call and/or email folks that signed the petition or post card. Thank them for attending and provide opportunities for them to volunteer at a future event, public hearing or write a letter to the editor responding to a news article about the rally.

Additional resources

- Tools For Change: <http://www.toolsforchange.net/2012/10/tips-on-how-to-organize-rallies-and-marches/>
- How to Organize a Rally: <http://toolkit.capta.org/advocacy/how-to-organize-a-local-rally/>
- Writing a Press Advisory <http://www.civilrights.org/census/media/media-advisory.html>

Questions?

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