



BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA

# Making the Hard Ask



# The power of the ask

DEMOCRACY IS PARTICIPATION. PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE WHEN THEY ARE ASKED. THAT MAKES INVITING OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE THE KEY TO OUR DEMOCRACY.

ASKING CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE. WE CANNOT LET THE DISCOMFORT SLOW US DOWN. EMPOWER OTHERS AND GROW YOUR CAMPAIGN BY NAVIGATING THE STRATEGY AND EMOTIONS OF MAKING THE ASK.



BUILDING BRIDGES  
FOR  
AMERICA



# Workbook Goals

## LEARN WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER

Build up your empathy and understand why people do or do not volunteer.

## BE PREPARED TO TAKE ON VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

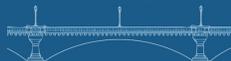
Cover the basics to give yourself confidence to make the ask.

## KNOW HOW TO ASK PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER

Walk through good habits of bringing people onto your team.

## BE READY TO ASK PEOPLE TO DONATE

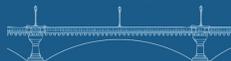
Take the steps to ask for donations and keep track of your donors.





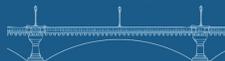
## Set the scene for the ask

- **You may feel embarrassed for asking for money or help. Identify that feeling. Feel where you sense it in your body. Then let it go. People are expecting to be asked. There is no reason to feel awkward.**
- **You want to forge a friendship. There is no script. You are talking with a like minded person. The ask is to join in the work of the common cause.**
- **You are going to get personal. Being vulnerable is hard. You will take the time to practice articulating the personal stakes that motivate you to volunteer for the campaign.**
- **You are listening more than talking. Start with "Tell me how you are doing." Use active listening to really understand what is driving them, then make the connection.**



# PART ONE

## Asking People to Volunteer



# Why do people volunteer?

To make a connection with potential volunteers you will need to understand why you are drawn to volunteer for the campaign, and also to understand why others volunteer, and why they do not.

## Common reasons why people volunteer:

### Issue

They are motivated by a campaign that advances an issue they are passionate about.

### Social

Volunteering gives them a purpose and helps them meet like minded people.

### Regulars

Experienced volunteers who help on campaigns all the time.

### Opportunity

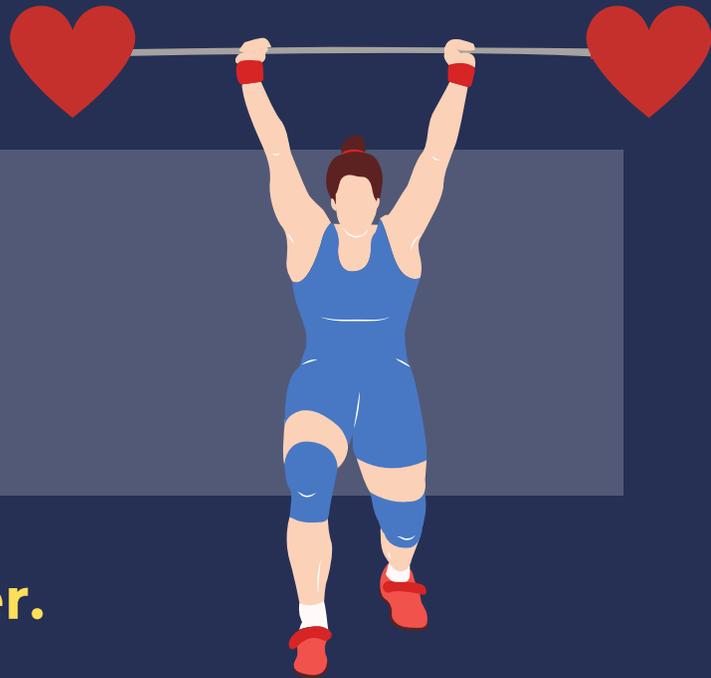
For job experience, or just rewarding experience, and a chance to meet the candidate.

### Loss aversion

They cannot survive the status quo.



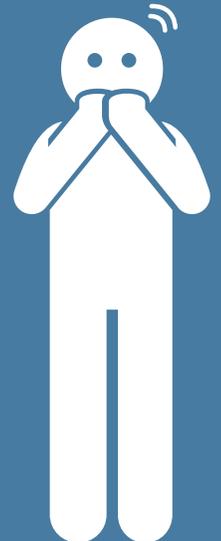
# Work Your Empathy Muscles



## Why people do not volunteer.

People will often say they do not have time to volunteer. But here may be the underlying reasons they may not want to say aloud.

- I have to put myself out there to be vulnerable.
- I'm not interested in long term activism, only here and now topics hold my attention.
- I'm satiated by changing my profile picture and being part of online awareness.
- I say I care but I don't act like it, I'm satisfied with status quo even if I don't say it.
- I'm more of a moderate and a lot of local political organizations are really ideological.
- I have the wrong disposition for interacting with people about politics.
- I move a lot and I don't have a connection to a local area.



Want a deeper dive into the motivations of volunteers? Check out Eitan Hersh's fantastic book ["Politics is for Power: How to Move Beyond Political Hobbyism, Take Action and Make Real Change"](#)

# Self Reflection

## Step

# 1

**Prepare to tell your participation story.**

**What motivates you to be active in politics?**

**How did you get started?**

**What are your personal goals?**



# Be ready for a team

Step

2

## Prepare to bring on a volunteer.

**Have a meeting and method of communicating set up and ready to invite them.**

**Be prepared to articulate your purpose.**

**What is your team looking to accomplish?**

**Why is your campaign important?**

**Need help building a team? See our Team series, especially the Grassroots Organizing for Change course and workbook.**



# Make a connection

## Step

# 3

**Picture yourself calling someone who volunteered on a campaign before.**

**Write down your preferred opening questions to find out what is important to them now.**

Examples: How are you feeling right now?  
What is pushing you to be active in politics?

**Practice your go-to active listening habits to dig down to find their motivation.**

Examples: "Oh, tell me more about that." "You sound very passionate. Could you share what made you feel that way?"

**See more phrases in the Active Listening Guide at the end of this workbook.**

**Say the connection you feel with them and share what motivates you from Step 1.**

Example: "I hear you, I completely understand because I feel the same way."



# Invite to the team

## Step

# 4

### **Practice aligning the team's goals with their motivations, speak to how they will be useful.**

Examples: If they regularly volunteer, talk about the joy you get from the team. If they are issue motivated, speak to the opportunity to make progress on the issue with the team.

### **Think of ways to word the Invite to a meeting or communication hub that is welcoming.**

Examples: "Could you come to a meeting and see what we are working on?"  
"Can I invite you to our Slack channel so you can be in the loop?"



# Navigate Push-back

## Step

# 5

**Often when people say they do not have time what they really need is a nudge past anxiety or a nudge to make real political action more of a priority. Rather than focusing on solving their time problem, instead offer ways to build their confidence or bolster their motivation.**

**People get anxious of the unknown when they fill it in with negative expectations. Speak to that and share a story of what it is actually like to do the tasks.**

**Share how good it feels once you can open up and really connect with voters.**

**Talk about tasks that match their personality so they can enjoy their volunteering.**

**Reaffirm the shared values and welcome them to join the team and be part of solution.**



# Follow up

## Step

# 6

**Following up on your conversation is imperative. Build the relationship, set the expectations, and make them feel part of the team.**

**Practice listening, connecting, and being persistent in your follow up conversation.**

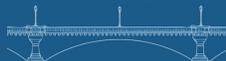
**"How are you feeling today?"**

**If they are not doing the work- "It is hard these days, but getting those couple of tasks done for the campaign really picks me up."**

**"Will I see you at the meeting?"**

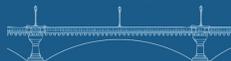
**If they so no or are unsure- "If you can't make the meeting, can we schedule a time to talk and catch up?"**

**Empathy and openness- "This is new, taking on new things is hard. Sometimes it takes a little nudge to get going."**



# PART TWO

## Asking People to Donate



# Prepare to manage your donors

## Step

# 1

**Keep track of your donors. Be meticulous about recording when they donated and how much and have notes of previous conversations.**

**Know how much funding you need to meet your goals.**

**Have fundraising events to which you can invite people. Have a process for donors to host fundraisers.**

**Set quotas with rewards or acknowledgments to offer people incentives to give more.**

**Be ready to share how their donations are put to use. Calculate concrete costs that their donation will cover. Cost for sending 1000 text messages. Cost of printing handouts to knock on 100 doors.**

**For more help getting started with donations, check out the [Financial Organizing guide](#) at the end of this workbook.**



# Make a connection

## Step

# 2

**Picture yourself calling someone for the first time who is known to donate to campaigns.**

**Write down your preferred opening questions to find out what is important to them now.**

Examples: How are you feeling right now?  
What do you feel is important right now?

**Practice your go-to active listening habits to have them dig down and open up.**

Examples: "Oh, tell me more about that." "You sound very passionate. Could you share what made you feel that way?"

**See more phrases in the Active Listening Guide at the end of this workbook.**

**Say the connection you feel with them and share what motivates you from Part One Step 1.**

Example: "I hear you, I completely understand because I feel the same way."



# Ask them to give

## Step **3**

**They are expecting you to ask them for money. Meet that expectation and exceed it by making them feel part of the team.**

**Practice being frank about money. Talk about why your campaign needs funding to achieve your shared goals.**

Examples: "We have a strategy to close the margin and we'll have the volunteers and staff but we need funds to buy the tools for them to use to reach voters."

**Give dollar amounts. State the maximum. Talk about how to be the most useful.**

Examples: "\$250 is the maximum donation. And since it is early, a \$100 donation now would kickstart us and let us go so much farther. Could you donate \$100 today?"



# Navigate Resistance

## Step

# 4

**Donors may say "not now" because they are strategic in how they decide where and when to donate. Avoid the horserace talk and focus on moving them with personal connection and teamwork.**

**Build trust by further sharing who you are and what drives you and state what it would mean to have them on the team.**

**Tell them about upcoming fundraisers the team is putting on and your fundraising goals.**

**Make sure they have your phone number and tell them how and when to contact you.**

**Ask them to consider talking to friends and family about the team and campaign and share the fundraiser and contact information.**



# Follow up

## Step

# 5

### Always stay in contact with your donors.

**Ask your donors to donate more. Thank them for what they have donated so far, state how it helped. Show the value in their donation. And then ask for more.**

**Ask your donors to invite three more people to donate. Give them the challenge to help the team by creating and meeting fundraising goals.**

**Ask your donors to host a fundraiser. Quickly expand your network of donors by having donors invite their own networks to a fundraiser. You can set days aside with your availability and ask them to chose a date and organize the fundraiser with your team.**



## ACTIVE LISTENING GUIDE

### THE BEST WAY TO CONNECT AND BE HEARD IS FIRST TO ACTIVELY LISTEN.

AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZER'S GREATEST SKILL IS TO LISTEN. TO BE HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD FIRST YOU NEED TO OPEN THE DOOR OF UNDERSTANDING. PRACTICE THESE BASIC HABITS AND SKILLS TO SHOW YOU ARE LISTENING AND WATCH AS THE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE GROW DEEPER.

#### **AVOID DISTRACTION**

Set your intention to listening.  
No daydreaming or multi-tasking.  
Remove things, persons or animals that might keep you from paying attention.

#### **REFLECT, PARAPHRASE OR CLARIFY**

Repeat back what you have heard  
"It sounds to me like you are saying..."

#### **PAY ATTENTION**

Do not use this time to prepare for a rebuttal. Ignore the divides and listen for the connections.

#### **DO NOT INTERRUPT**

Allow the other person to finish what they are saying.

#### **USE DOOR OPENERS**

Keep them engaged and talking  
"Tell me more"  
"That's interesting"

#### **DO NOT ARGUE**

"I can tell you are very upset/frustrated"  
"I know that it has been hard for you to change gears"

## ACTIVE LISTENING GUIDE

### REFLECT AMBIVALENCE

“So, on the one hand you want \_\_\_ and on the other you don’t think you can \_\_\_”

### LOOK FOR COMMON GROUND

“Where do you think we could find common ground?”  
“We agree on this, what else do we agree on?”

### EXPRESS YOUR ATTENTION

Words and phrases like “Oh”, “I see”, “uh huh” and “hmm” show that you are listening.

### CREATE DISSONANCE

“Tell me (describe to me) what your feeling are on \_\_\_\_\_”  
“Can you tell me what is keeping you from supporting \_\_\_?”

### SHOW EMPATHY FOR THEIR FEELINGS

“I am hearing you say that you are frustrated because \_\_\_\_\_”

### WRAP UP

“Thank you for talking with me.”  
“I appreciate your opinion and understand your concerns.”

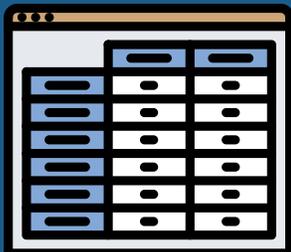


## FINANCIAL ORGANIZING GUIDE

### PREPARE TO MANAGE DONORS

Be meticulous about tracking donors. Record when they donated and the dollar amount. Take notes of conversations with them to help you build a relationship. And never lose your list.

Email addresses are the currency of political campaigns. Capturing a list of emails allows you to market to those people. For the same reason, physical addresses are gold. It is worth the cost and time to offer to send a sticker or other merchandise to get a physical address.



### FIND DONORS

Democracy is participation. Find people who otherwise would not know about access or opportunity to support campaigns. Do not judge people by their appearance or actions. Never assume who will give and who will not. Ask your volunteers for donations.



### DONOR ENGAGEMENT

Offer donors a social connection. Have both online and in-person fundraisers. Keep people informed of fundraisers. Ask them if they want to go, and specifically invite them to an event near them. People are much more likely to attend a fundraiser if they are specifically asked.



### MAKING THE ASK

Ask them about drives them to be a donor and participate in politics. Actively listen to lead them to dig down and get personal. Then connect by sharing your feelings and personal story. Talk about the campaign team and make them feel part of the team. If someone donated, then show them how helpful the funds were and ask for more. If they have donated the max ask them to host a fundraiser.



# Next Steps

**Put your story to work. Build your political power and connect with others who are taking action.**

**Learn to ask supporters to volunteer or donate money. Take the next course in the Power series to invite your supporters to become a powerful team.**

**Build your team with our Team series of courses. The series of courses with workbooks walks you through starting your grassroots organization and building the skills of your team to effectively engage voters.**

**Pop the Disinformation Bubble**



**Starting Your Grassroots Organization**



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## WEBSITE

[WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM](http://WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM)

# OTHER AVAILABLE TOOLS

AVAILABLE AT  
[WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM](http://WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM)

## TEAM SERIES

Build your grassroots team with Grassroots Organizing for Change.. And learn messaging with Say This, Not That, how to host events with Events for Change, and step up your organizing with Facebook Activiist to Change Maker and Local Leader.

## CIVICS SERIES

Know the system to fix the system. Get the basics with Civics for Everyone, then learn to use civics for effective organizing with Civics for Change.

## DAYS OF ACTION

Join Building Bridges for Days of Action throughout the week to support candidates and issues.

## REAL TALK: POP THE DISINFORMATION BUBBLE

Timely sessions to understand how people can believe lies and how to use empathy to break through with the truth.

## VOLUNTEER'S TOOLBOX

Ready to print infographics, online presentations and workbooks.

## BRIDGES TO THE LOCAL

Support local down ballot candidates throughout the U.S.

# BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA LEADERSHIP TEAM



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