THE ORGANIZING PROCESS

At this point, it's useful to go into some detail to illustrate a particular method for building new organizations. Given that there are multiple models and blueprints to create them, there is no one set organizing methodology. This book will not attempt to cover all the possibilities. But an in-depth illustration of one process for establishing a GCO should be instructive. Readers can decide for themselves the extent to which this model can be generalized and modified to fit other situations or how much is specific to the circumstances that I describe.

I will be laying out a process for building a direct-membership, neighborhood, turf organization that may engage in either community development or social action. It could have either single- or multi-issue goals. There is an assumption that a "shared leadership" structure will be created, whereby power is not concentrated in the hands of just a few people, and recruitment to ensure a steady supply of new activists will be an ongoing activity. The model is designed to create a broad-based organization with a strong emphasis on participatory democracy and active membership involvement. There's also an assumption that a paid organizer—either an insider or an outsider—will be present.

I believe that this direct-membership model easily can be modified for GCOs in the issue, identity, or workplace arenas. In fact, this approach has its roots in the "Boston Model" originally utilized by the Massachusetts Welfare Rights Organization, an issue/identity GCO. It's deliberately simple and universal enough to be easily replicated, making it possible to develop comparable chapters within a larger citywide, state, or national structure. For instance, ACORN has employed a variation of this model to build a powerful *national* organization of low- and moderate-income people with chapters in at least forty states.

On the other hand, the formation of an O of O or a coalition is very different from building a direct-membership organization. Creating these structures involves a series of steps designed to entice preexisting GCOs to buy into the new umbrella organization. The organizing process for an O of O often culminates in a "people's convention" or a "community congress." A direct-membership organizing drive features systematic, one-by-one recruitment of individuals or families leading to an organizational formation meeting. While there are many similarities in the ways that these different types of organizations carry out their work, the particular methods and skills utilized to build them obviously will vary. This section will be confined to a direct-membership model.

My approach has developed over the past thirty-five years and draws heavily from my personal experience with the Boston Model in the National Welfare Rights Organization, with neighborhood organizing in Los

Angeles with Warren Haggstrom, as an organizer and regional staff direc-
tor for Massachusetts Fair Share (statewide), as lead trainer for ACORN's
Institute for Social Justice, with the Committee for Boston Public Hous-
ing, and as a trainer and consultant with scores of turf, issue, and identity
GCOs in a wide variety of locations across the United States and abroad.
Few of the techniques set forth here were developed solely by me. Rather,
they represent an amalgamation of the ideas and methods of a number of
highly skilled organizers with whom I've had the opportunity to work.*
Therefore, this organizing model bears a strong resemblance to a number
of others that also work very well. While the specific methods may vary,
there are common basic principles for organizing and moving people into
action that are present in all successful models. Accordingly, this section
can be read on two levels—as a general outline of key principles or as a
step-by-step guide for a particular organizing model that has a long and
strong track record of success.

The Model: Groundwork, Organizing Committee, Recruitment, and Formation

This organizing model has four distinct phases:

1. *Groundwork:* During the first phase of the organizing process, organiz-
   ers gather basic information about the community and begin analyzing
   the power dynamics at work within it.
2. *Developing an Organizing Committee (OC):* An initial core group is needed
   to provide leadership and direction for the organizing effort. If the or-
   ganizer is an "insider," the process of pulling together such a group is
   fairly straightforward. Outsiders will find it necessary to go through sev-
   eral additional steps—first talking with community "gatekeepers" to
   convince them of the merits of creating a GCO, obtaining a "contact
   list" of potential OC members from them, then visiting and recruiting
   some of these folks, plus new contacts identified in "snowball" fashion.
3. *General Recruitment Drive:* A systematic recruitment is launched with the
   active support and participation of the Organizing Committee members.
4. *Formation Meeting:* The organizing drive culminates with a formation
   meeting where temporary leadership is elected and organizational action
   is planned.

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*The partial list includes Bruce Thomas, Bill Pastreich, Wade Rathke, Kris Ockershauser,
Warren Haggstrom, Mark Splain, Barbara Bowen, Mary Ellen Smith, and Mary Lassen. Most
importantly, this model flows from the knowledge and techniques developed by the leg-
endary Fred Ross.

The initial phases of this model, in particular, are critical to the success of any organizing effort, providing legitimization, an initial leadership core, the identification of key issues in the neighborhood, and an opportunity to neutralize potential opposition. Depending on whether the organizer is an insider or an outsider, the first two phases usually take between two and six weeks. If some combination of door-to-door recruitment, individual meetings, housemeetings, networking, and group presentations is used, the general recruitment phase will take another six to eight weeks, depending on the size of the community and the number of people doing the recruiting. These figures are somewhat flexible; however, six to eight weeks of general recruitment seems to be the maximum time that an organizing drive can continue without the loss of critical momentum.

When knocking on doors to build a turf organization, most organizers will be able to average between thirty and forty doors per day, or roughly 200 per six-day week. So, 1,000 to 1,500 doors per organizer during the course of a recruitment drive is a realistic figure. Typically, neighborhoods of more than 4,000 doors usually don't hang together very well and pose the danger of becoming "paper organizations" unless there's more staff for ongoing doorknocking. On the other hand, areas of less than 500 doors may be too small to produce adequate leadership numbers and membership dues potential.

Issue and identity organizing also may utilize doorknocking, but often employs home visits or individual meetings with potential members (e.g., seniors, welfare recipients, and ethnic group members), as does workplace organizing. The methodology could be different with other constituencies, such as youth, deinstitutionalized mental health consumers, or LGBT community members, focusing on face-to-face recruitment in places where potential activists might be found, such as youth centers, street corners, basketball courts, and parking lots; mental health programs, clubhouses, and residential facilities; or LGBT clubs, businesses, restaurants, or residential areas, respectively. Active involvement of OC members in these recruitment efforts would be especially helpful. And organizing in these other arenas frequently will entail recruiting from a much smaller base of potential members. So, four or five individuals might be recruited per day, compared to the 30–40 daily interactions an organizer might have when doorknocking. But the general principle is the same, *use face-to-face recruitment methods in natural settings where potential members are accessible and feel comfortable interacting.*

Groundwork

Before beginning the organizing process, it is wise to gather some very basic information. Many organizers call this process a "power analysis." The work will be very different for outsiders who are starting with only

minimal knowledge, as opposed to insiders, who already will know much of this information. Nevertheless, it is important to look very closely and systematically, challenging preconceived ideas and suppositions as appropriate. The key is to see what can *be*, not simply what is. During the Groundwork phase for a turf organization, I attempt to gain basic information about the following:

Turf. What are the natural boundaries of the potential organizing area? Are there obvious physical boundaries such as a highway, major street, railroad track, or industrial area? What are the church parish boundaries or the areas designated for various government programs and development projects? How does this area mesh with the rest of the city? Political jurisdictions (congressional, state legislative, ward, precinct, city council, and so on) also may be relevant, although such districts frequently are gerrymandered contrary to neighborhood lines. Ultimately these boundaries will have to be squared with how the residents themselves define "the neighborhood," but it is important to understand the interface with other districts and geopolitical lines.

Demographics. Insiders start with a pretty good sense of "who's who," although impressionistic data may not always be completely accurate. Outsiders usually enter the community with inadequate information about population patterns and trends. In either case, some systematic analysis is in order. Using basic statistics, reading (both current and historical), and talking with knowledgeable people are valuable to get a sense of basic demographic trends and characteristics. A number of questions are relevant. Who currently lives in the community? How have these statistics evolved over the years, and are they likely to change in the future? What is the composition along dimensions such as race, ethnicity, social class, age, gender, family composition, and religion? What important identity communities may be present (e.g., LGBT, refugees and immigrants, mental health consumers, university students, homeless people, deaf and hard of hearing, artists, or religious groups)? Who is moving in or out of the neighborhood? Is the area becoming gentrified, or are more low-income people moving in? What is the mix of tenants and homeowners, and is it changing? Do landlords tend to occupy their own properties, or are they increasingly absentee? Dozens of such questions should be asked and answered in order to understand the potential constituency and the implications for organizing.

There are multiple data sources, including the U.S. Census; state, county, and municipal governments; redevelopment and housing authorities; and various human services agencies and programs that serve particular populations. Remember that such data typically undercount people in low-income areas and many ethnic groups—especially newcomers and people who are undocumented. Accurate statistics for homeless individuals, youth involved in gangs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disabilities will be particularly elusive, and typically will not be

found in official data sets. But street outreach workers, social clubs, health centers, community leaders, and human service agencies/programs can help fill in the missing information. The objective is to get a reasonably accurate demographic picture, with an eye toward organizing the whole area or identity communities within it.

Key Institutions. It is critical to understand how a host of different institutions impact the community. A partial list includes local government bodies, public schools, housing authorities, churches, large employers, banks, hospitals, health clinics, universities/colleges (when present), newspapers, and other media outlets. I will not attempt to present an exhaustive list of standard questions about key institutions. Obviously, it is critical to learn about the structures, budgets, and decision-making processes in any institutions that the GCO is likely to target. Each organizing situation is unique, and one question invariably leads to another. The primary purpose of this activity is finding potential organizing issues and targets or possible sources of support. Local churches often will be especially helpful in providing various forms of assistance. In a very real sense, GCOs continually monitor the performance of institutions and regularly assess their relationships with them. The analysis that takes place during groundwork simply initiates this ongoing process.

Community-based Organizations and Agencies. The list includes unions, church groups, senior citizens' clubs, neighborhood associations, merchants' groups, political organizations, social groups, and the multitude of service agencies. The list of organizations may be quite extensive. It's important to look first for potential support; however, various forms of competition also are an unfortunate possibility. The new GCO will be interacting with these other organizations and agencies for the rest of its existence. It's essential to get the lay of the land and to establish positive relationships wherever possible.

Powerful Actors. Who are the movers and shakers—the variety of people who head up key institutions and organizations/agencies, or who fill various roles as brokers, gatekeepers, leaders, and people of influence? Examples might include public officials, civic leaders, landlords, key people from the business sector, developers, large employers, clergy, human service workers, community leaders, and other power brokers. From this list will come potential allies, opponents, targets, people to neutralize, and perhaps even some participants in the GCO.

Existing Issues. Usually a new organization will not get involved in a longstanding issue that already has produced leaders and some measure of organization. Exceptions are possible here, but the main purpose in studying these issues is to learn more about who and what are the major forces in the community.

Potential Issues. People will be recruited largely around specific issues. These issues invariably spring from social problems that produce hardship,

injustice, dissatisfaction, and anger. The organizer helps people create a structure and a strategy to overcome these problems. The process of issue selection is discussed at much greater length later; at this point, it's sufficient to say that during the Groundwork stage, organizers look at social conditions in an attempt to find problems that can be remedied by future organizational campaigns.

The best organizers (whether they are insiders or outsiders) can spot the contours of future issues on a political landscape that are indistinguishable to the untrained eye. As the organizing drive progresses, organizers should sharpen and test these issues with the emerging leadership, who make the final decisions for action.

Objective Conditions and Political Trends. This is a very broad area covering every level of influence—from the impact of new development projects in the neighborhood to the national political climate. The analysis aims to determine what is possible for the organization to accomplish given *conditions and trends at different levels over which it has little or no control.* These conditions make it possible to accomplish more in certain spheres of activity and less in others at any given time. Thus, an organizational campaign to expand city services in a neighborhood might be less than successful if conducted in the face of a 25 percent cutback in city expenditures. Conversely, the local branch of a corporation that's been cited for discriminatory hiring patterns might be vulnerable to an organizational campaign to win jobs for minority residents. Some examples are obvious and others more subtle. During the Groundwork phase, the organizer begins the never-ending process of analyzing these conditions and trends and projecting the potential issue campaign possibilities.

Conceivably, this Groundwork stage could take months to complete. Communities are dynamic entities, and as such constantly must be reexamined and reanalyzed. However, most organizing efforts operate under the realities of tight scheduling and do not have the luxury of long periods of study. In any case, the most relevant knowledge about a community will come as its members begin to engage in dialogue about their hopes, fears, and concerns. Whether the organizers are insiders or outsiders, the Groundwork stage usually can be completed within six to eight weeks, and more quickly when necessary. The need to gather more information should not become a reason for postponing organizational activity, causing an "analysis paralysis."

Taking all the information gathered during Groundwork, organizers now are ready to begin the process of developing an Organizing Committee.

The Organizing Committee

An Organizing Committee (OC) is a working group (typically twelve to fifteen people) that provides direction and leadership for the general

recruitment effort or Organizing Drive. The committee gives visible legitimization to the organizing effort, actively recruits new members, helps neutralize potential opposition, begins to define the first issues, and provides an initial leadership core that works together with the organizers to build the new GCO. It is critical for OC members to develop a true sense of loyalty to and ownership of the organization. They should have an ego investment in its success, actively promote the effort, and defend it if questioned or challenged by various opponents.

Members of the OC should be well-known and highly respected within their own community. They set the tone that will be established for the GCO. It is important that they be willing to share power with other emerging leaders and that they embrace an action-oriented, democratic approach that features broad-based, bottom-up participation by the group's membership. And it is also essential that they *make a commitment to work actively to build the new organization.* Their presence on the OC helps establish credibility for the developing GCO, but more than their name is needed. The active involvement of a strong, dedicated Organizing Committee dramatically increases the likelihood that the effort will get off to an excellent start.

Clearly, this is the point where organizers exercise their greatest power within the GCO, because they play a major role in identifying potential OC members and then inviting specific individuals to join this committee. At this early stage, organizers definitely are playing a leadership role as they take the initiative to launch a new GCO. A viable Organizing Committee fills this initial leadership void and helps move organizers out of this role. For insiders, who already have multiple contacts and relationships within the community that's organizing, creation of an OC is a fairly direct process of reaching out to people whom they think would make a valuable contribution to this body. During the course of doing this recruiting, they also should ask for the advice and suggestions of community gatekeepers and opinion leaders, as well as "snowball" contacts from the new OC members. But essentially, *building an Organizing Committee is a one-step process for insiders*.

On the other hand, *a two-step procedure is necessary for outsiders* who start without many initial contacts with community members. The next section describes how outsiders can work through community gatekeepers to begin the process of gaining entry to the community, developing a list of potential OC members to meet with in the process.

Gatekeepers. How do outsiders find such people when they don't know many or any community members? It is advisable for them to work through community gatekeepers to develop a contact list of possible OC members to visit. By *gatekeepers*, I mean individuals who have the power either to allow or to prevent new people and ideas from reaching a group. Since each community contains various formal and informal groups, it

follows that a number of gatekeepers will be in any neighborhood. The gatekeeper is not necessarily a part of the in-group, but rather acts as an intermediary between it and the outside world. The same person may serve as a gatekeeper for several groups simultaneously. Typical examples would include members of the clergy, social service workers, visiting nurses, Head Start coordinators, legal service attorneys, and settlement house staff. The organizer also should remember that some of these potential gatekeepers may be actively *disliked* in the community and therefore not really function in this role. So, it's important to check them out and to start with the most trusted people. Gatekeepers are respected by group members and leaders to the point where they can introduce new people and ideas.

While gatekeepers can help the outsider gain access to a particular group in the community, they cannot give true legitimization to the organizing effort. Such a "license to operate" must come from the key opinion leaders within a particular group. Therefore, the outside organizer approaches gatekeepers with an eye to the future, hoping to enlist their support in gaining access to various formal and informal community groups. Starting a new organization may upset some people or raise a lot of questions about the organizer's motives. It is critical that gatekeepers view the new GCO as trustworthy and legitimate. The outsider will have to present credentials along with the reasons why the effort is beginning. Gatekeepers should be clear that GCO members will control organizational decisions and policy. Outside organizers should emphasize that their role will not entail being leaders.

As in everything he or she does, the organizer has a strategy for approaching these people. Building on the information gained during the Groundwork phase, he or she determines which contacts potentially will give active support, who simply will be sources of information, as well as who needs to be neutralized. The organizer then determines the best sequence for visiting these people. There is a need to build positive momentum; it makes sense to approach several of the more likely supporters first before taking on some of the potential skeptics.

Since there is still a need to gain more knowledge about the neighborhood, the more sophisticated contacts should be saved until all possible basic information has been gathered from the easily approachable gatekeepers. This insures the most efficient use of the limited time with the "heavyweights," enabling outsiders to avoid superficial questions, gain subtle insights, and project the organizing effort as serious and significant.

Meetings are set up either in person or over the phone. At least 30–45 minutes should be allowed, so whenever organizers are simply popping in on someone, they should make sure there's adequate time to meet. Organizers never should enter any meeting without a clear agenda consisting of both a goal and a game plan to achieve it. Regardless of what takes place in the meeting (except when the plan must be altered in

midstream) it is important never to lose sight of this goal. As former United Farm Workers organizer Bill Pastreich always says, "Keep your eyes on the grape."

The meeting usually follows a clear pattern and sequence, which I'll divide somewhat arbitrarily into four phases: *credentialing, discovery, the vision*, and *the commitment*. These terms, like others in this book, are used as an attempt to label (and thereby simplify) various concepts and activities in the organizing process—not to mystify them. To the extent that the reader develops a shared meaning of these terms, we will have a working *language* of organizing. Such a language makes it possible to discuss the organizing process more efficiently, using one word in place of several sentences. Some of the terms I use are fairly universal to community organizing, while others are my own personal shorthand. (Uller, 1970, for instance, uses the terms "credentialing," "digging the issue," "brain picking," and the "pitch" to describe similar activities in his excellent paper on house-meetings.)

Credentialing takes place when outside organizers introduce themselves and the new GCO. Through the process of *discovery*, the outsider attempts to learn as much as possible about the neighborhood issues and the gate-keeper. An organizational *vision* is laid out to generate interest and excitement, and finally a specific *commitment* is sought. While these phases may overlap or subsequently repeat themselves in various combinations, the following outline should give a fairly accurate picture of the dynamics of a gatekeeper meeting. It should be remembered that the primary goal will be access to community leaders through the gatekeeper's contacts, with secondary goals of support (letters of endorsement, space to hold meetings, publicity in newsletters, and so on) and information (greater depth in the areas covered during Groundwork).

Credentialing. The logical question raised by the presence of an outsider organizer at the gatekeeper's door is, "Who are you and what do you want?" Credentialing is the process by which outsiders answer this question, introducing themselves and the organization they represent. Obviously, this should be done in a manner that inspires some degree of confidence and interest on the part of the gatekeeper. Initial trust comes from a combination of the organizer's personal style of speech, dress, eye contact, and presentation along with her or his ability to introduce the new GCO in the most favorable and legitimate light.

Outsiders should look and act in a manner consistent with community custom and must put personal idiosyncrasies aside. Questions often arise about why an organizer for a "progressive" community organization that's working for a free and open society should have to compromise on personal lifestyle. The answer lies in the fact that social change must come through collective action and organizers must be accepted initially by community members on their own terms in order for effective communication

to take place. Outside organizers will have enough problems as it is with new ideas about collective action that may arouse suspicion.

But a good appearance and style won't be enough to establish initial trust in most cases. The outside organizer also must portray the organization he or she represents in a positive way. In some instances, a well-known GCO may carry strong credentials of its own, either positive or negative, that affect the organizing process. For instance, the organizer might be working for ACORN, National People's Action, or Neighbor To Neighbor. In other cases, an outside organizer will be starting fresh, with no real track record. In all situations, it is important to build on whatever legitimization the GCO already has. Therefore, support from other gatekeepers and organizations (churches, unions, agencies, and/or social groups) should be mentioned prominently during the introduction.

Finally, the outside organizer should carry tangible evidence of the GCO in the form of membership buttons, descriptive flyers or brochures, letters of endorsement, and favorable newspaper clippings, if they exist. As in any other introductory situation, the organizer and the organization are attempting to put their collective "best foot forward." Hopefully, the initial trust and interest generated by this effort will allow the outsider to move forward with the meeting.

Discovery. It is difficult to appeal to a person's self-interest without understanding "what makes that person tick." Now it's the outside organizer's turn to find out from the gatekeeper, "Who are you, what do you know about the community, and where does your self-interest lie?" I call this process "discovery," and I learn the right answers by asking the right questions.

Asking questions like an organizer is an acquired art that is difficult to describe. Whenever I'm working as an outside organizer, I usually begin by seeking some basic information about the neighborhood (often I already know some of the answers) and how the gatekeeper sees things. Sometimes I'm looking for hard data and substantial answers, while other times I'm looking for subtle "keys" to the gatekeeper's attitudes and self-interests. As previously mentioned, I often save the "heaviest" gatekeepers until last so that I go into the meeting with some existing support, momentum, more sophisticated questions, and a good feel for the issues and dynamics of the neighborhood.

There is no prepackaged list of questions that I ask. Specific responses trigger different follow-ups and new directions as I ad-lib off the conversational flow. But typical initial questions might include, How long have you lived/worked here? What do you see as the major problems in the neighborhood? What's the best way to solve them? Are there any groups or individuals working on these problems now? Who are the key grassroots leaders in the community? What are the various elected officials doing for the neighborhood? What about existing institutions and social service

agencies? What's your agency/institution/group doing, and what's your role in it? Is there a need for a new organization to help people get more power and control over everyday problems?

There is a complex process at work during this part of the meeting, where I'm doing a little flattering, learning new information, "psyching out" the person, and subtly testing some issue themes. While I'm asking my questions, the gatekeeper may be asking some of her or his own. But in reality, I almost totally control the content of the conversation with my friendly but rapid-fire questions. By the end of this discovery process, I know considerably more about the gatekeeper than he or she knows about me or my GCO. I've kept my cards close to the vest and almost completely read the gatekeeper's hand. I've answered honestly and openly, but dropped my own poker face only at strategic moments.

The Vision. At this point it is logical for the gatekeeper to begin wondering, "What's this organizer's angle and what's in it for me?" Having discovered much about this person, I'm now prepared to lay out an organizational *vision* attuned to the gatekeeper's self-interest. Building on my knowledge of the neighborhood and its problems, as well as the attitudes of the gatekeeper, I describe some of the things that a new organization could accomplish, using real precedents wherever possible. While the vision may vary from person to person in style and content, it is always honest and always leads to the inescapable fact that an organization must be built.

At this early stage in the organizing drive, there is no way for the outside organizer to promise action on a particular problem or issue, since those decisions will be made by a currently nonexistent membership and leadership. Before any decisions can be made or problems solved, a GCO must be created. The vision is designed to grab the gatekeeper's attention because of its potential solution to problems and issues, but it also should move her or him to the conclusion that building a new organization is a necessary precondition.

The Commitment. Having offered the vision as bait, I am ready to set my organizational hook and reel in a *commitment*. It is time to ask the gatekeeper, "What will you do for the organization?" In this case, I want a list of contacts whom I can approach, using the gatekeeper's name. Secondly, I may want meeting space, a letter of endorsement, or some general publicity.

I always ask for the major favor first. If I allow the gatekeeper to grant me a minor favor first, I've let her or him "off the hook." I call this the "Big Favor First Principle" and have found it to be true in most areas of human interaction. If there's a negative answer to the major request, I can always work my way down the ladder of priorities, combining a request for a lesser commitment with the person's "guilt" over having denied the major favor. But my leverage for securing the maximum commitment is greater when nothing else has been granted.

Proper timing is always key when seeking a commitment, not unlike a salesperson's sense of "when to pop the question." I move to the commitment at a point where I feel the gatekeeper's interest and excitement have peaked. I attempt to establish a "yes psychology" by avoiding questions that might produce a "no" answer and getting agreement on several easy statements such as, "It sure sounds like we need a strong organization around here" or "I know you're concerned about the neighborhood and its problems—that's why I contacted you." Then, looking the person directly in the eye, smiling, and nodding my head slightly, I say something like, "We need your help in getting started!" and ask for the names of people in the neighborhood who might be interested in such an organization. Having gotten as many names as possible, I then seek permission to use the gatekeeper's name and ask for secondary commitments.

The description above may give the reader the impression that organizing is a rather cold and calculating business. It isn't cold, but it is calculated. Outside organizers have to think strategically and must use all the psychological "tricks" at their disposal if they hope to overcome the inevitable suspicion and distrust they will encounter. To do anything less is to set the stage for failure. Having talked to five or more gatekeepers, I should have a list of 15–20 contacts. Now I'm ready to begin building an Organizing Committee.

Opinion Leaders. All communities are made up of a large number of formal and informal groups ranging from block clubs, church organizations, and social clubs to friendship and kinship networks. The members of these groups each have varying degrees of influence and power over their peers. The individuals with the most influence, hereafter referred to as *opinion leaders*, usually have the power to give the organizer a "license to operate" within their group. This is accomplished when the opinion leaders give their trust and support to the organizer, thereby legitimizing the organizing effort. By gaining the support of key opinion leaders, the organizer maximizes the possibility of being accepted by other group members, because these leaders have the most ability to introduce new people and ideas. An introduction by a less influential group member gives the organizer less initial credibility and risks incurring the anger and jealousy of some key people, who may feel slighted.

Of course, it's possible to gain legitimacy by talking with a significant portion of a group's members, whose collective influence may exceed that of any one opinion leader. Indeed, organizers attempting to help people create a democratic, broad-based organization must be careful to avoid dealing with a few people on an elitist basis, thereby creating a bad organizational precedent. There must be a balance between the need to search out people who have the respect and trust of their neighbors and the need to prevent a concentration of power in the hands of a few people.

Furthermore, any social group is a dynamic rather than static entity. The power of various individuals within each group ebbs and flows; a person may have a great deal of influence in social matters, but little power to alter political opinions. Local opinion leaders may be very important with one faction of a social group and less powerful with another faction. At times, different groups will overlap one another, and the same individual will hold differing status in the various groups in which he or she is a member.

Similarly, a license to operate from one neighborhood group does not insure legitimization in any other neighborhood group. In fact, gaining the support of one group actually may alienate the organizer from other rival groups. Often, organizers will need to choose which of several conflicting groups are most important for the organization-building process. Legitimacy will never be gained with all, or perhaps even a majority, of the formal and informal neighborhood groups, but the organizer seeks the "critical mass" that will enable the work to move forward effectively.

The insider organizer already has solid contacts with many opinion leaders (and perhaps a few negative relationships), so after moving quickly through gatekeepers—or skipping them altogether—he or she also can move much more rapidly than outsiders through the process of dealing with opinion leaders. For instance, organizers must differentiate between real opinion leaders and grasstips leaders. Often grasstips leaders develop the ability to move easily in the institutional world as official representatives of their communities. They even may have some capacity to deliver on small favors for their "constituents" much in the same manner as politicians in a political machine. But, while these grasstips leaders tend to occupy visible token positions in establishment groups, they are not respected in their own communities and have no base of followers. Since they often are neither responsive nor responsible to neighborhood people, grasstips leaders seldom have the ability to grant the organizer a real license to operate.

Two other phenomena should be noted. First, well-established organizations, such as ACORN, often generate invitations from neighborhood residents interested in establishing a new organization. While such invitations generally are a distinct advantage and present possibilities for initial legitimacy, the organizer must determine how broad-based and representative the group doing the inviting is. There is an obvious danger in working exclusively with a narrow segment of the population, and the organizer must make sure that other parts of the community are involved in the organizing process.

Secondly, sometimes there will not be an adequate number of contacts for either insiders or outsiders. Then some "cold doorknocking" will be necessary. Often, this work can be done in areas that appear to have potentially hot organizing issues, such as abandoned houses, vacant lots, or bad traffic intersections. The major drawback to approaching someone

cold is that the organizer lacks legitimization from relevant gatekeepers and opinion leaders. However, if the issue is compelling and the individual isn't part of another community group (whose members could feel threatened and hostile toward a new GCO), these problems can be overcome. The organizer often can find new opinion leaders by asking the "cold visitee" to name other "good people to see." The people whose names are mentioned most frequently may turn out to be key opinion leaders.

Another approach to finding initial leadership is to engage in relatively innocuous doorknocking activities such as voter registration or petitioning for noncontroversial programs. This variation has the advantage of allowing the organizer to thoroughly test the waters before embarking on an organizing drive. The disadvantage is that it's time consuming. A compromise might be to do a general telephone survey that could be used to identify individuals interested in building a new organization. Follow-up visits then could be made.

Ideally, an Organizing Committee will consist of 12–15 members. But, obviously, we are not looking for the first 12–15 people who express some interest in a new GCO. We are looking for people with leadership potential, people who are, to some degree, opinion leaders within a community. Yet we also must find people able to develop a *primary loyalty* to a new organization, rather than those who wish to remain "big frogs" in their small-group ponds. In order to find 12–15 such people, the organizer should visit at least 30–40 "warm contacts" or make 70–80 "cold visits." While it is certainly possible to find enough people for the Organizing Committee by making fewer contacts, the quality of the committee will suffer accordingly.

I believe in going slowly in the early stages of organizing in order to build the strong initial leadership foundation upon which the new organization must stand. Provided that I have at least ten people, I am more concerned about the quality than the quantity of people on the organizing committee. Large numbers will be important at the chapter formation meeting, but good potential leadership is the priority during the early stages of organization. (I should also point out that much of the information contained in the section on Opinion Leaders also is applicable to the General Recruitment Drive as well. While identifying initial leadership and developing an Organizing Committee are essential, a central purpose of the drive is to move large numbers of rank-and-file members into the new organization. The reader should keep this in mind when examining this section on Opinion Leaders.)

Getting in the Door. It is time to begin making home visits—for insiders, directly to people they know, or for outsiders, to the contacts provided by gatekeepers. Again, the insider has a significant advantage and usually will not have to worry about getting in the door of people whom they already know. If I am an outsider, I usually go directly to the person's house rather

than try to set up the appointment over the telephone. While bad experiences with door-to-door salespeople are common, and the phone may eliminate some of the feeling of high pressure that people often sense when someone suddenly appears at their door unannounced, the telephone is a relatively anonymous means of communication. It's much easier for people to give excuses over the phone than face-to-face. Since this model covers a fairly concentrated geographic neighborhood, arguments favoring the telephone because of increased efficiency carry little weight. If my contact isn't home, I simply walk up the street to another person on the list.

My goal is to get inside the person's home where we can have a full conversation. It's difficult to be effective if forced to stand outside and talk through a half-closed door. The person will be anxious to return to what he or she was doing before being interrupted. More important, the organizer who's been invited into a person's home has won a small but meaningful degree of trust. I always take the initiative—the *key to getting in a door is to ask.* By asking directly, I put the person in a situation where a quick decision must be made. Usually they will consent.

A simplified face-to-face conversation might begin like this:

Staples: Hello! Mr. Thomas?

Thomas: Yeah, What do you want?

Staples: My name is Lee Staples and I'm working in the neighborhood here. Father Flanagan over at St. Peter's Church suggested that I talk with you.

Thomas: Father Flanagan sent you?

Staples: Right! I've been talking with a lot of families around here about the possibility of starting an organization to work on some of the neighborhood problems. Like that intersection up the street at Maple and Fifth. Father Flanagan says you're concerned about your kid's safety.

Thomas: Yeah, the cars speed through there like the Indy 500. I signed the petition for a light but it didn't do any good. The city people say they don't have the money.

Staples: Well, that's exactly what I'd like to talk with you about. 'Cause if enough people want to start an organization we *can* do something. If you've got a few minutes to sit down and talk, I'd like to get your ideas on this.

Thomas: Well . . . I guess I've got a few minutes. Who'd you say you work with?

Staples: Thanks! [Smiling and walking in, I then proceed to fully explain about the organization I am working with and complete the credentialing process.]

In this example, mentioning Father Flanagan's name gave me a degree of legitimacy. I also offered my credentials, although somewhat vaguely, and immediately appealed to Mr. Thomas's self-interest on the traffic issue. I jumped at the slight opening to come in, but using a smile and answering his question allowed me to avoid appearing too "pushy."

Finding Common Ground. During the "discovery" phase, I attempt to find out how this person views the world, what kind of leadership potential he or she may have, and what he or she thinks are the most important issues. I also try to establish some common social ground, learning something about each person's interests, how long they have lived there, where they work (if they do), the names of their children, pets, and hobbies, and accepting most offers of food and drink (although never hard liquor or drugs). During these conversations, I share some of the same information about myself, hopefully making a connection. The subjects will vary, but during all these communications I take copious mental notes, many of which I write down later on 3″ × 5″ index cards.

A typical visit will last 20–45 minutes, and during this time I quickly must sensitize myself to how the person sees the world. Not surprisingly, this will differ greatly from person to person. A young Latina woman renting a rundown apartment for the past six months lives in a different world from an elderly black man who has owned a little house next door for thirty-five years, even though both may be considered low-income community residents. The organizer must appeal to the self-interests of each person and synthesize an organizational vision consistent with multiple worldviews or "realities."

The first step is to understand how different social groups perceive and define reality. Appeals to people's self-interest, engagement in conversation about the neighborhood, humor, and the ability to arouse curiosity often enable an organizer to adjust to the multiple subjective realities of neighborhood groups. Through constant questioning during the discovery process, the organizer can distinguish between individual traits and those that are shared, a key factor in identifying collective concerns and potential organizing issues. *I am attempting to find personal problems that can be aggregated into political issues.*

Essentially, outsider organizers must learn to think like community members. For any outsider, this process is similar to learning a different language and reaching the point when they suddenly begin to think in the new language, without having to make a mental translation back to their native tongue. In fact, learning a language and learning a culture are interdependent. Reality is created and maintained by language, but the same words may have very different meanings in two different realities. Insiders will need to be aware of how different subgroups define social reality. For example, if I remark to a welfare recipient that "the welfare system is a mess," the recipient probably will agree, thinking that I mean there is "too

little money for people to live decently." On the other hand, the same remark to a low-income worker may be interpreted to mean that "too many 'freeloaders' are getting on welfare."

Apart from differences in meaning caused by multiple realities, many words are losing all semblance of common significance. Words such as *democracy, freedom, empowerment, participation*, and *community control* have been corrupted beyond recognition, most often by politicians and advertisers. Organizers who talk about such abstract concepts must give concrete illustrations and use vivid images to help create a new set of significant symbols that will be shared by the organization's members.

But before such a new reality can be constructed, there must be what Haggstrom (1971) has called a process of "reality softening," whereby certain collective assumptions are called into question. During doorknocking, people often remark that their particular neighborhood is uniquely unorganizable. I always challenge this opinion by citing examples of successful organizations that people have built in other "unorganizable" neighborhoods. Clichés such as "You can't fight city hall" are countered in the same way.

I also try to assess the person's leadership potential during the discovery phase of the visit. I particularly look for characteristics such as energy, enthusiasm, anger at injustice, critical consciousness, political instincts, self-confidence, sense of humor, ability to deal with conflicts, and democratic tendencies. I look for people who have some natural following, yet do not have strong primary loyalty to any other organization. Negative characteristics include racism, sexism, homophobia, prejudice against welfare recipients or other minority segments of the neighborhood, extreme allegiance to particular elected officials, ideological dogma, lack of time, timidity, unpopularity, and general "flakiness."

Finding Issues. Finally, I am constantly searching for possible organizing issues. Just as a hungry person can glance at a page of a newspaper or magazine and immediately focus on all the "food" words, the organizer can pick potential issues from seemingly random bits of conversation. Of course, the conversation should not be random, as the organizer steers it by asking a series of questions probing for issues among the various social problems in the neighborhood.

What is an issue, and what differentiates it from a problem? A *problem* is a difficult situation or circumstance, an open-ended question with no particular resolution, such as lack of affordable housing, high crime rates, poor schools, or inadequate health care. *Issues* are proposed solutions to problems, which often may be controversial. They may entail disagreement and dispute over social action to remedy some aspect of the problem, such as the need for rent control, a police foot patrol, parent learning centers, or universal health care. But they also might be addressed through community development—developing new units of low-cost housing, a

crime watch, a volunteer tutorial program, or a community health fair. While the organizer should not choose the issues, he or she does play an active role in helping people transform seemingly unsolvable general problems into specific, actionable issues.

What makes a good organizing issue? Good issues build organization by attracting participants. They must appeal intensely to the self-interest of a significant number of people, and in order to do so, they need to meet several criteria. Perhaps the best test of a self-interest issue was established by Saul Alinsky (1969), who argued that the issue must be *immediate* enough for people to care deeply, *specific* enough for them to grasp, and *winnable* or realistic enough for them to take the time to get involved. To the extent that an issue can meet these criteria, it will have a strong *self-interest draw* with the potential to attract large numbers of people.

Clearly, the people getting organized will be the best judge of what is most *immediate* to their lives. Sometimes these problems may seem insignificant to the organizer, who secretly might wish to focus on more "substantial" issues. But control over the issues is essential if the members are to feel that they direct their own organization; and, besides, people will not participate on issues that they do not identify as immediate to their own lives. Organizers should not impose their pet issues on community members and should concentrate on helping to identify those conditions and problems that arouse the most salient interest. Then, he or she can play an active role in carving out an actionable issue.

There is an almost direct correlation between the level of interest and the level of discontent surrounding a particular problem. The organizer doesn't simply assess dissatisfaction in a neutral fashion but maximizes existing indignation by asking agitational questions that "rub raw the sores of discontent." The organizer can't create dissatisfaction where it doesn't exist and shouldn't try to do so, yet he or she can help bring complaints to the surface as part of the discovery process.

Long ago, Lyle Schaller (1972) identified four of the mainsprings of discontent that organizers can use in searching for possible issues. The first is "response to what is perceived as a bad decision." Thus, an organizer who learns that a fire station will be closed for budgetary reasons will raise questions about how people interpret the decision. Usually an unpopular proposal will generate as much unhappiness as a final decision. Plans for a new highway through the neighborhood, an increase in utility rates, or a decrease in summer youth jobs all would be fertile ground for dissatisfaction. The organizer can heighten the sense of injustice by asking such comparative questions as, "Would other, wealthier neighborhoods be treated so shabbily by the powers that be?"

Discontent also emerges through the *vision and model* concept. By emphasizing what *can* be accomplished, reinforced with successful examples and precedents, the organizer can stimulate discontent by raising expec-

tations that solutions can be found. For instance, a vacant lot may be covered with abandoned cars, old bed springs, broken glass, and a mix of other debris. People from outside the neighborhood may be dumping trash there illegally. The organizer could begin by asking residents how they would *like* to see the property used. Is a playground needed? Do folks want a community garden? Should it just be a quiet park? The organizer should describe basic options leading to the desired outcome, such as a community cleanup (community development) or a social action campaign pressuring the owner or the city. News clippings, photographs, organizational newsletters, and vignettes could illustrate how other groups successfully resolved similar issues.

Schaller also points to "the self-identified discrepancy" when the individual sees "the difference between the ideal and reality" (1972). The organizer constantly searches for contradictions between the public and private behavior of various decision-makers. Thus, the "All-American City" with its crumbling neighborhoods, the "People's Bank" that is guilty of disinvestment, and the civic leader who owns substandard rental housing all are vulnerable when illusions are stripped away. Slogans and advertising lines such as "No Child Left Behind" or "The Company that Cares about You" can be taken at face value to raise questions about public officials, businesses, and government bodies. In short, the organizer helps expose discrepancies or contradictions and agitates to raise the level of dissatisfaction.

Finally, discontent grows where there is a "malfunction" in a basic social institution. For example, delays in the hospital emergency room, ineffective jobs programs, poor police response time, or the welfare department's inability to process new applications efficiently all are potential issue areas. Generally, people's complaints are not far below the surface in such cases. The "sores of discontent" already are festering. It doesn't take much to make them raw. *The key is to begin raising options for successful group action to resolve these problems.* At a later point, an existing GCO may foster discontent by overloading institutions or organizations that may be performing poorly, such as adult literacy programs, neighborhood health services, after-school tutorials, employment training, or housing assistance. But at this point in time, dissatisfaction arises totally naturally.

Throughout this process, the organizer doesn't "preach" at people, but rather lets them draw their own conclusions—albeit in response to agitational questions. Where dissatisfaction does not exist, organizers should attempt to find out why and then either change their approach on the subject or move on to test a different problem. Often, community members may attempt to mask their true emotions when talking with outsider organizers that are relative strangers. But as people become angrier, their real feelings usually pour forth. Nothing should be forced. By talking *with*

(rather than at) people and *listening* carefully to them, both insider and outsider organizers begin establishing the necessary climate of mutual trust and self-respect. *Good listening skills are essential for effective organizing.*

Having determined the immediacy of a problem, the organizer works with people to sharpen the lines that will define *specific*, actionable issues. Organizing issues are "cut" from social problems much as a piece of pie is cut from the whole. Problems such as housing, crime, and the environment are overwhelming for any GCO to tackle; it is essential to break them down into specific community development or social action issues—the creation of fifty units of affordable housing or a campaign to force absentee landlords to abide by the state sanitary code, a community crime watch or increased police foot patrols, or an environmental awareness education program or a campaign targeting corporate polluters. The goals and objectives need to be at a level that is manageable for organizational action. If this is not done, recruitment will prove difficult; most people prefer action that is specific, rather than generalized talk.

Organizers help people move from problems to issues by offering specific, actionable proposals. For instance, if community members complain that city hall has written off the neighborhood and no longer provides needed services, the organizer tosses out ideas for possible action. Is a traffic light needed at the intersection of Hope and Pray Streets? What about getting the city to reopen the closed swimming pool in Parched Earth Park? Should new sidewalks be constructed along Hazard Boulevard? Are more streetlights needed on Ominous Avenue? As people respond to these specific options, issues begin to take shape.

Just as there are many ways to slice a pie, there also are numerous ways to cut an issue. For example, the housing problem can spawn issue campaigns as diverse as rent control, low-income home improvement loans, developing new units, inclusionary zoning, boarding up abandoned houses, homesteading, lead paint removal, code enforcement, or passing a condominium conversion ordinance. Obviously, community members will choose to cut issues in ways that meet their own self-interests, and the proposals will vary as the organizer moves among different people. The organizer should make it clear, however, that the decision to work on specific issues will be made democratically (at this stage either by the Organizing Committee, when it begins to meet, or by the general membership, once the organization is formed).

Actionable issues are essential, but alone they will not ensure organizational success or widespread participation. In order to overcome the sense of hopelessness and apathy that often pervades low-to moderate-income communities, issues must be *framed* so that community members are convinced that a concrete victory is *winnable*, that it is realistic enough for them to make a commitment to get involved. *Framing* entails clearly defining or cutting the issue, explaining who is responsible, and suggesting

potential solutions (C. Ryan, 1991). A good issue frame leads to a plausi-ble pathway to success—the swimming pool shouldn't be closed, the mayor is responsible, and we will bring pressure to bear on the mayor during this upcoming "election year." This very credible scenario enables people to de-velop a *vision* for change. That vision must be exciting and compelling. It must give rise to a new sense of hope and urgency. It must move people.

Building Momentum. At this point, organizers must become more ag-gressive, more positive, and more energized. People have to be motivated and "fired up" to join in collective action with other community members. Organizers frequently will meet resistance and skepticism. Negative think-ing ("People around here just don't care," or "What good does it do to or-ganize? City hall only will ignore us") must be challenged. Despair and pessimism must be replaced by hope and enthusiasm. Any organizer should firmly believe that the next person talked with will be ready to join. A sense of optimism and excitement must be conveyed. This takes intensity and drive. The organizing effort should be like a rolling train, gathering force and momentum as more people hop onboard.

The organizer must convince community members that concrete vic-tories can be achieved through collective action, that the vision is possi-ble. Success will turn primarily on two factors—the actual content of the pitch or "rap," and the effectiveness of the organizer's delivery. Of the two, the delivery probably is most important. Having established an atmos-phere of mutual respect and trust, the organizer must communicate in a clear, succinct, direct, and compelling manner. Language should be crisp and vivid; abstract concepts should be concretized through clear examples. The organizer should avoid pedantic, cumbersome language, like that typ-ically found in academia.

The rap needs to be fueled by genuine sincerity that springs from the organizer's anger and outrage over the conditions and problems faced by community members. It must be energized by an honest belief in the ef-ficacy of collective social action. Organizers will not be effective until and unless they fully embrace the grassroots community-organizing approach that they have undertaken. This is no time for skeptics or cynics, for the faint of heart or those who just can't start. The excitement and enthusi-asm of a sincere organizer are contagious, and people will respond ac-cordingly. The organizer uses a combination of agitation, self-interest, humor, inspiration, and positive examples to motivate people, and refuses to accept negative opinions about the inability of community members to organize successfully.

But faith alone will not produce victories. The actual content of the vi-sion emphasizes the power of—and need for—a GCO as the vehicle to pro-duce social change. The idea is to convince people that only a strong community organization will have the clout to resolve the immediate, spe-cific issues that have been cut and framed. The organizer cites examples of

successful action taken by other GCOs in comparable circumstances. The more similar the example (in geographic and time proximity, type of constituency, and kind of issue), the stronger the impact.

Where examples and precedents do not exist, hypothetical "What if?" questions can be asked. For instance, in a situation where residents want to take social action to force the cleanup of a vacant lot filled with junk and debris, the organizer might ask, "What would happen if everybody got together and asked the owner to come out to a meeting right here in the neighborhood?" He or she could embellish the question by raising possible action options, such as taking the owner on a tour of the property, inviting the media, and presenting a series of specific demands. In response to the inevitable question of what could be done if the owner refused to show up, the organizer might ask, "What would happen if we went to the owner's business office with lots of angry people and small children carrying signs?" Further possibilities for escalation could be raised: "What would happen if lots of people got together, threw a bunch of the junk in a truck, drove out to the owner's house in the suburbs, and dumped it on the front lawn?"

While not telling people what to do, the organizer asks questions that suggest possible strategies and tactics for action. A range of options is given. In the process, *the vision of successful resolution of the issue becomes clearer*. People begin to see that this specific issue that is so immediate to their lives is indeed ***winnable*** through collective action. The organizer stresses that the formation of a powerful GCO is a necessary precondition to resolving the issues. The reason why problems haven't been dealt with before is that community members haven't been organized. Only by creating a powerful broad-based democratic organization will people be able to win concrete victories.

While taking a more aggressive role in laying out the organizational vision, I still want people to arrive at their own conclusions rather than overwhelming them with a slick rap. Naturally, the vision varies slightly from person to person; the two-way conversation and multiple worldviews I encounter insure this. As the organizing drive progresses, I am able to build on the knowledge and information already gathered to develop a more precise and sophisticated organizing pitch. The pace often is uneven during these visits. The credentialing, discovery, and vision phases are not neatly separated but instead are interwoven throughout the entire time. Eventually, however, I move to seek some sort of *commitment.*

At this stage in the organizing drive, the commitment that is sought will vary. The people with the greatest leadership potential and interest will be encouraged to help form the Organizing Committee; most of the others will be urged to join the organization and attend the chapter formation meeting. The organizer has a tremendous amount of power and control at this point. Subjective decisions are made regarding leadership potential, and there is always the danger of abuse of these responsibilities.

Nevertheless, the organizer must attempt to pull together the most effective Organizing Committee possible. Once established, that OC will play a major and critical role in the remainder of the organizing process. Therefore, the quality of this initial leadership group may very well determine the ultimate success of the fragile new GCO. Never again will the organizer exercise as much influence as during these initial stages before the organization actually exists. This power must be transferred to the emerging leadership as soon as possible. And the better the leadership, the more effective and efficient this process will be.

Therefore, only the top prospects are recruited for the Organizing Committee. In order to have a good record of everyone visited, I keep 3″ × 5″ index cards with each person's name, address, phone numbers, occupation, issues, further contacts given to me, and other relevant information. Frequently, I'll go back to a contact at a later time to seek a commitment to join the OC. This delay allows me the opportunity to draw from a larger pool of people and gives the person contacted time to fully assess the emerging organization. Often, some of the best potential leaders may hang back in the early stages until the GCO "proves itself." In a typical drive, I might recruit 18–20 people for the Organizing Committee from a total of fifty contacts.

The final OC (12–15 probably will participate on a regular basis) should have a mix of people by race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and physical and mental disability roughly proportional to the overall population of the community that is organizing. While some turnover can be expected from meeting to meeting, at least half of this group should form a solid, emerging leadership core. They need to have the interest, time, and energy to involve themselves actively in the remainder of the organizing drive. As they begin to develop a group identity, organizational loyalty and ownership will evolve, and thereafter the organizing effort will have true legitimacy within the community.

General Recruitment Drive

The next phase of the organizing process is an intensive effort to recruit community members to join the emerging GCO. The Organizing Committee directs and coordinates this process while working alongside the organizer to sign up new activists. The first meeting of the OC kicks off the General Recruitment Drive.

Organizing Committee Meeting. At this meeting, the initial leadership group comes together to make the plan for building the new GCO. The date and time of this meeting should be chosen with care to insure that key people can attend. Ideally the meeting will be held in one of the member's homes, with a clear understanding that subsequent meetings will be rotated. This directly involves the people doing the hosting in the recruitment

process and increases their sense of ownership. It also helps prevent conflict and attacks that are more likely to occur in public places—especially if other organizations are competing for turf. Since the group will have no history or elected leadership, the organizer chairs this first meeting. A typical agenda would include:

· Introductions
· Discussion of Issues
· Decision to Organize
· Dues Collection
· Recruitment Plan and Timetable
· Time, Place, and Chair for Next OC Meeting

When issues are discussed, I frequently like to use a short slide show with color pictures of various neighborhood problems already identified during the home visits. The pictures of specific conditions such as abandoned houses, dangerous intersections, vacant lots, or poor school facilities usually spark a lively discussion. In cases where other chapters of the GCO exist, slides depicting the successful resolution of similar issues can be mixed in to illustrate the efficacy of organizing. As the song goes, "Every picture tells a story." Thus, both the issues and the organizational vision can be concretized. A slide show also is an excellent vehicle for relating an organization's history or explaining citywide, state, or national issue campaigns. During these discussions, the OC members begin a process of cutting, framing, and prioritizing issues that continues right up to the chapter formation meeting. The organizer facilitates this examination by asking agitational questions, exploring possible courses of action, and testing the group's responses. During this and subsequent meetings, some issues may be added while others are dropped.

The dialogue about the issues inevitably should lead to a discussion about the need to organize. If the initial work with OC members has been done properly, everyone in the meeting already will be predisposed in favor of organizing, but the group discussion collectively reaffirms each personal decision. An actual vote to organize may be taken, or the group simply can reach a clear consensus. The formal decision to organize is in no way superfluous. This action by respected community members constitutes an official sanction to build a new GCO. In some instances, these OC members will be called on to defend against attacks by assorted opponents and detractors, including politicians and "grasstips" leaders who feel threatened by a new organization that challenges traditional power relationships. Collectively formalizing the decision to organize gives the OC members a greater sense of group identity and cohesion. The whole organizing effort begins to become *theirs*, as they take responsibility for decisions and processes.

The importance of organizational ownership by an emerging leadership group far transcends defensive purposes. The exercise of power and control by the membership is a goal in itself for grassroots democracy. Prior to the formation of the Organizing Committee, no structure exists to make decisions.* The organizer, who up to this point has controlled all key decisions, now is able to begin transferring decision-making power to OC members.

At this time, organizers also are able to initiate the process of explaining and clarifying their roles. Questions often arise over "who's supposed to do what." The discussion about whether to organize provides a logical opportunity for organizers to begin answering questions about role relationships. They can explain that the role does not entail making final decisions on issues, strategies, tactics, or organizational policy. Rather it is the organizer's job to help build and develop the organization to its greatest potential. This often entails facilitating discussions, teaching new skills, helping develop analytic abilities, giving strategic and tactical training or advice, acting to preserve democratic processes, and generally functioning as an organizational resource.

The topic only can be introduced at this point. As the organizing process continues, countless opportunities will be available for further role structuring and defining. I find myself constantly reminding people, "It's your organization," and answering questions about my opinion with the question, "What do *you* think?" As an organizational history develops, roles will become clearer and expectations more predictable. Once the consensus to form an organization has been reached, it makes sense to collect dues from those who haven't already joined. The Organizing Committee will be highly visible in the weeks ahead, and it is imperative that all members demonstrate their full commitment by paying the dues. Prior to this first OC meeting, I always talk individually with the invitees about the importance of dues and make sure that they have already joined or are prepared to do so. The dues collection at the meeting also provides an opportunity for a wider discussion about the importance of internal funding and membership control of finances. It is critical to deal with questions about why there are dues and where the money goes.

Discussions of a recruitment plan often produce suggestions about the need to "get ourselves on radio and TV" or "in the newspapers." This type of general publicity never has and never will build solid community or-

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*Some models—especially the O of O approach—use a "Sponsoring Committee" to fulfill this function. Sponsoring Committees usually consist of visible, influential people such as the clergy, representatives from labor, civic leaders, or social service agency representatives. Their purpose is raising funds, providing initial legitimization, and at times hiring organizers and overseeing their work until a new GCO is established. If the organizational constituency is drawn from institutions, such people may in fact become leaders. But if they are not from the group doing the organizing, it is not appropriate for them to make basic organizational policy.

ganization. The most effective means of organizing involves face-to-face contact with everyone in the community through a systematic recruitment drive. General publicity can be used to supplement and reinforce face-to-face contact, but it is no substitute.

When building a turf organization, it makes sense to do recruitment by knocking on every door in the area. This approach also may be the most useful for issue or identity organizing when a high percentage of potential GCO members live in a concentrated area. If community members are more dispersed, it is more efficient to make targeted home visits working from a list of possible members. But in either case, direct contact is made by knocking on a person's door. The most effective doorknocking is done when organizers (especially outsiders) team up with individual OC members (although two males may not be a viable option in many communities). Therefore, during the OC meeting, I seek commitments to help doorknock, setting specific dates and times while enthusiasm is highest. One technique is to pass around a calendar with doorknocking slots filled in ahead of time by some of the members. This helps build the expectation that everyone should sign up.

As part of the recruitment plan, the OC usually drafts a letter to inform neighborhood residents that an organizing drive is taking place. The letter mentions some of the specific issues the new GCO hopes to address, briefly explains a little about how the group will work, and notes that door-to-door recruitment will take place. Residents are urged to join and attend the founding meeting. The names and sometimes the addresses of the Committee members are typed at the bottom along with several contact phone numbers (see Appendix). It is important to deliver the letters right before doorknocking or home visits, since it helps allay questions and concerns that community members may have when someone comes around knocking on their door. The letter either can be mailed or dropped at the appropriate dwellings. Mailing often makes most sense when home visits will be made, unless OC members are able to personally distribute the letters. In turf organizing where every door will be visited, it is far cheaper, quicker, and more efficient to hand deliver.

The OC also should choose a name for the new GCO at its first meeting. This will be used on all leaflets, letters, and posters that are used to publicize the chapter-formation meeting. A time and place for that first meeting should be set, with several people taking responsibility for getting permission to use the site—frequently a church, school, library, settlement house, social service agency, union hall, or social club. The site needs to be familiar, easily accessible, and "neutral" enough so that all segments of the community feel comfortable going there. Great care also should be taken to choose a day and time that's convenient for most community members and doesn't conflict with any other major meetings or events.

Decisions will need to be made about providing food, refreshment, and childcare. Finally, a time, place, and temporary chair for the next OC meeting are chosen. Meetings usually are held every other week, although some organizing models call for weekly meetings. It is best to rotate the chair and location for these early meetings rather than build any entrenched leadership at such an early stage. Institutional sites that are closely identified with particular neighborhood factions should be avoided if possible or rotated at the least.

Doorknocking. Following the first meeting and circulation of the letter, doorknocking begins immediately. Experience has shown that about a six-week period is the optimum time frame for this phase of the drive. Of course, the actual amount of time required will be a function of the total amount of doorknocking hours available, the time efficiency rate at which people are contacted, and the number of people targeted for recruitment. If OC members are not available, the organizers will have to go alone in order to hit all the doors. Generally, there is a tendency to overestimate the doorknocking hours available and the contact efficiency rate. Remember, it takes time to move between houses, and many people will not be home the first time you visit. Four to five conversations per hour will be a good rate when going door-to-door, and only three when making home visits.

When doorknocking, staff and leadership should wear organizational buttons (make them, if they don't exist) and carry any existing credentialing materials, including copies of the letter, written endorsements from clergy, reprints of any favorable news stories, and a leaflet announcing the chapter-formation meeting (time, the day as well as the date, place, and hot issues identified by the Organizing Committee). Picture IDs also will be invaluable in communities where doorknocking may arouse suspicion and fear. It's important that doorknockers carry membership cards and a clipboard with a sign-up sheet attached.

Time efficiency is crucial, so the average visit won't last much longer than ten minutes. Still, it's important to get inside the door. The organizing letter may be used in the credentialing process, but it is a serious mistake to hand someone anything lengthy to read before getting inside. Otherwise, they wind up reading while the doorknockers watch, shuffle their feet, and wait. That disrupts the doorknocker's timing, overemphasizes written materials to the detriment of the spoken word, and delays the request to enter the house. Once inside, there is adequate time for people to examine written materials.

In addition to the kind of credentialing used in the initial doorknocking, I lead with some issues hoping to get an immediate self-interest response. In fact, the right issue and a sense of momentum on it will get you in more doors than leading with credentials. This is a typical approach:

Knock, Knock, Knock.

Resident: Yeah?

Staples: Hi—I'm Lee Staples, working with [name of GCO] here in the neighborhood. You've probably heard of us. [Smiling and nodding affirmatively I briefly wave the letter.] You probably got this letter from us last week. We're the group that's getting organized to do something about these high utility bills and problems like that abandoned house around the corner on Maple Street. [Pause.]

Resident: Really?

Staples: Yeah—there's lots of people who want to see something done about that house. Would you like to see it boarded up or torn down?

Resident: Well, sure—who wouldn't?

Staples: Right—well, if you've got a few minutes I'd like to come in and let you know what's happening. I'll bet you've got some good ideas.

Resident: O.K. Come on in.

Upon entering the house and taking a seat, I engage the person some more on the issue, gradually weaving in some of the organization's credentials. Since there is no longer the luxury of extended visits, I usually refuse offers of food and drink. Time is too short to allow for the long discovery process used during the earlier stages of the drive; now the vision and the commitment assume the most importance. If solid work has been done during the earlier phases of the drive, the doorknockers will be able to identify the person's self-interest quickly and accurately.

Thus, doorknockers ask questions about possible issues during the shortened discovery phase. Usually these questions are asked in a subtly agitational manner, with the recruiters making an educated guess as to which issues will be most relevant. Upon getting a good response on an issue, they lay out a vision pointing to successful resolution of the problem through organizational action. Again, precedents are cited whenever possible and the language should be simple, direct, and precise.

For example, after entering the above home, I might continue:

Staples: Isn't there a school bus stop right in front of that house on Maple Street?

Resident: That's right and I really worry about my little girl waiting there in the morning. The big kids hang out there and there's all kinds of trouble.

Staples: Did you hear about the fire that was set in it last week?

Resident: I sure did! It's just a matter of time before some kind of tragedy happens over there.

Staples: Well what do you think should be done? Mrs. Jones checked it out and found that the city owns it.

Resident: Hey, it's got to be boarded up or torn down. Better yet, the city ought to sell it cheap to some family that's willing to fix it up. You know there's lots of people who need housing around here.

Staples: You know, that's just what the ACORN group over near Codman Square did. They had an empty house just like this one, only it was right next door to a nursing home. A bunch of people from the neighborhood got together and went down to the city hall. They had signs and leaflets and even brought the TV cameras with them. They embarrassed the mayor and forced the city to sell the house real cheap under the Homesteading Program. Now there's a family already moved in there and fixing it up.

Resident: Well, all *right!* That's what we need around here! What's this ACORN group, anyway?

With this kind of response, I would be well on my way to recruiting a new member. An explanation about ACORN and a dues pitch would follow. A commitment to attend the formation meeting would not be difficult. If the person showed leadership potential, I might stay a little bit longer but I also would have to keep moving at a fairly good pace. A note on the person's card would remind me to do a follow-up visit after the big meeting. Perhaps he or she might take a leadership role on this issue at that time.

The doorknocker should be careful not to spend too much time with people who are obviously negative. The conversion rate is low, and even when successful, the recruiter spends an inordinate amount of valuable time convincing someone with questionable organizational instincts. While this may be good for the doorknocker's ego, it is usually bad for the GCO. For instance, I have seen a number of cases where doorknockers for social action groups have minimized discussion about direct action and militancy with people expressing opposition to such tactics. While this approach succeeded in drawing these people to the meeting, once there, they were disruptive and counterproductive. Similar cases have occurred with people who exhibit strong racist tendencies, loyalists to other organizations, close supporters of various politicians, and an assortment of difficult personalities. While a GCO's strength lies in its numbers, it is important to recruit community members who buy into the group's basic philosophy and goals.

In short, the organization will not appeal to everyone, and not everyone will be helpful to the GCO. True, some of the best organizational people may be skeptical initially, and it may take time to convince them to get involved. Certainly, doorknockers must be careful not to offend people and

should take the time to neutralize hostility that can cause future organizational problems. But far less than a majority of people actually will join and participate actively. *Ten percent is a good realistic goal, sufficient to give the GCO strength in the community.* Doorknockers should concentrate on those who show the most interest in the issues and are excited about engaging in collective action with other community members. There may be exceptions, but in most instances when meeting negative people, it is best to cut the conversation short and minimize the time loss.

Doorknockers must be sensitive to individual differences. Varying the rap is essential; the set or "canned" approach should be left to mediocre door-to-door salespeople. Testing different raps during the initial steps of the drive significantly increases the odds of effective communication with different types of community members during the doorknocking phase. In short, the best recruiters simply use "different strokes for different folks," varying their rhythm and timing with each person. These constant changes not only enhance the vision that is offered but also make the doorknocker's job more interesting, challenging, and fun.

Just as important as the content of the rap is the manner in which the vision is delivered. It matters little what words recruiters use if they are not personally confident in their approach or cannot radiate warmth, enthusiasm, and sincerity. Giving an organizing rap isn't merely an intellectual exercise or a case of remembering which words to use for certain types of people. Doorknockers must be able to generate excitement and arouse people's emotions. They have to overcome skepticism and negative thinking, and know when to be low-key and when to be fiery. There is more art than science in a good organizing rap.

At this stage, two major commitments are sought during doorknocking—membership dues and attendance at the chapter-formation meeting. The recruiters hope to come away from the visit with the dues money in hand and the resident's name on the sign-up sheet for the first meeting. Generally, collecting the full membership dues will be more difficult than getting a commitment to attend the first meeting. Remember the *Big Favor First Principle*. Since people might offer to pay at the initial meeting, it makes sense to attempt to get the dues money *before* signing them up.

Many inexperienced recruiters have difficulty asking low-income people to pay membership dues. In order to be effective, you first must fully understand and believe in the necessity of the dues money for ultimate organizational survival. A successful dues pitch cannot be defensive or apologetic, and recruiters must convey their sincere commitment to the principle of internal funding. Community members immediately will pick up on a tentative dues rap or a lack of self-confidence on the part of the doorknocker. Securing a dues commitment again involves building the conversation to a peak and developing a "yes psychology." Effective eye contact should be maintained, and after getting agreement about the need to

build an organization and the person's interest in getting involved, the recruiter simply and directly asks for the dues. Having eliminated two excuses already (no need and no interest), I usually toss out a familiar phrase such as "everybody knows you don't get something for nothing" and launch into an explanation of what the dues money is used for and how the members run their own organization.

I diminish the amount by breaking it down to a *weekly* figure and then compare this small amount to other kinds of expenditures (cigarettes, beer, and fast food being my favorites). Thus, I am left saying something like "That's only three dollars per week, less than a pack of cigarettes, less than a six pack or an order of chicken tenders. Now isn't it worth a few pieces of greasy chicken a week to make this neighborhood a better place to live for yourself and your kids?" Obviously, other examples should be cited for nonsmokers, nondrinkers, and healthy eaters; the technique is to juxtapose the small amount of weekly dues with various small luxuries.

I make sure to hand the person a membership card and pen, saying something like "Now's the time to do it." If the person doesn't have the cash, I ask for a check, and if there's no money in the account, I suggest a postdated check. While this may sound heavy-handed to some, it really is not. We aren't selling vacuum cleaners, and no one is coerced or tricked into joining. The doorknocker who is sincere and convinced about the potential for a new organization must transfer a sense of urgency to the person being recruited.

Of course, not everyone will pay the full dues during this first contact. Some want to wait to see the actual formation of the new organization. Doorknockers carry clipboards with sign-up sheets for those planning to attend the first meeting. Never start a sign-up sheet (or petition) with a blank page, since most people don't like to go first. Members of the OC can fill in the first few lines on each sheet. Name, address, and phone number are recorded. The phone number is essential, because each person will be given a reminder phone call several days before the big meeting. Having the folks actually write this information on the sheet helps reinforce their commitment to attend. People are accustomed to writing their names on important documents such as checks, leases, and licenses, and writing their name on the sign-up sheet helps firm up their commitment. More than once, I have overheard one community member ask another if he or she planned to attend a meeting only to receive the reply, "I guess I better—I signed up to attend."

Finally, a flyer for the meeting is left with each person, and in some instances further information or smaller commitments are sought. People may be asked to give a neighbor a ride or to talk to friends about joining. I frequently ask the names of other people on the street who may be interested, then when I come to that person's door, I can refer back to this visit for legitimization.

Housemeetings. I also like to hold housemeetings in the early stages of the doorknocking drive as a supplementary recruitment device. House-meetings simply are small meetings (5–15 people is a typical attendance) held either in someone's home or in a neighborhood church, branch library, or some other familiar place. People are recruited both through doorknocking and the invitation of members of the Organizing Committee. In addition to providing a recruitment opportunity, the housemeeting serves as a training ground for the emerging leadership and a forum for discussing and testing new issues.

A typical agenda includes introductions, discussion of the issues, explanation of the organization, collection of dues, and recruitment for the first meeting. Again, slide shows can be extremely effective as a catalyst for focused discussion and as a means of bringing the organization to life. These small meetings provide an opportunity for organizers to observe the new leadership in action, and they can play a number of roles—including the collection of dues. Housemeetings often are the organizer's best means of assessing leadership potential and provide members of the Organizing Committee with invaluable experience.

The person hosting the meeting plays a key role, welcoming people as they arrive, making them feel comfortable, and engaging them in conversation. It's especially important to put the early arrivals at ease and get them talking with one another. As the meeting begins, a host should handle the introductions and give a short enthusiastic rap about her or his own organizational involvement. The host and other new leaders should take responsibility for as much of the agenda as possible.

The group setting creates reinforcement—either positive or negative—for participation and dues collection, since there's a tendency for people to follow the lead of those who first react to the organizing pitch. Therefore, it's helpful to have a few people who already plan to join the GCO attend these meetings. When the dues pitch is made, these folks can be asked to join first, thereby creating a positive precedent. Otherwise, an educated guess must be made as to who is most likely to join.

Of course the prior commitment must be as solid and tight as possible. I once held a housemeeting at the home of a key neighborhood opinion leader who had enthusiastically agreed to join the organization. The meeting was a tremendous success, with seventeen people in attendance and a spirited discussion of the issues. As I wound up my dues rap, I confidently asked the host if she was ready to join. She quickly agreed, but as I handed her a membership card she added, "But I won't have any money for another month because of the Christmas holidays." Almost immediately, everyone else at the meeting took the same position. Despite my most eloquent pleas, I wasn't able to sign any of them up as a member until after Christmas. Reinforcement works both ways.

While housemeetings have many benefits, including involvement of the

Organizing Committee, full discussion of new issues, and possible posi-
tive reinforcement for dues collection, they do take time to set up and, of
course, cost a night of doorknocking. For that reason, when building
chapters of a turf organization, I usually only hold two or three house-
meetings during the drive. However, in situations where organizing will be
confined to only one neighborhood and time is less of a factor, a slower
but more intensive model, utilizing a series of intermediate housemeetings
leading to a chapter-formation meeting, may be preferable.* And house-
meetings may be the featured method when organizing by identity or in a
workplace arena. But under almost all circumstances, a minimum of sev-
eral housemeetings will strengthen the leadership and improve the overall
drive considerably. One caution is in order, however. Unless well con-
structed, there is a danger that members will confuse housemeetings with
the formation meeting and skip attending the latter. The problem can be
avoided by building in preparations for the big meeting as part of each
housemeeting agenda.

Formation Meeting

The Organizing Committee continues to meet throughout the door-
knocking drive. Recruitment progress is assessed at each meeting, new OC
members may be added, issues are discussed and researched, and targets
and demands are clarified. As the formation meeting approaches, its
agenda is set, roles and tasks are divided, and role-playing practice begins
to take place. These meetings also help build the momentum and excite-
ment for the upcoming formation meeting. The committee usually makes
a plan for general publicity, including announcements in church bulletins,
posters in local stores or community agencies, and sometimes even a small
local newspaper article. Again, such publicity is designed to serve as rein-
forcement for those who already are planning to attend, rather than as a
primary source of recruitment. There is no real attempt to recruit people
who have not engaged in a face-to-face conversation about the organiza-
tion. A large influx of such people at a first meeting generally will be coun-
terproductive, causing varying degrees of confusion, dissension, and
disruption. For similar reasons, there is an attempt to identify and, if pos-
sible, neutralize various politicians and other individuals who have their
own agendas that are inconsistent with the goals of the developing GCO.

Certainly, the most effective form of supplemental communication is the
reminder phone call to those people whose names and phone numbers appear

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*Such a model often is more effective in rural areas where the distances between houses
make doorknocking less practical. Housemeetings also may provide an essential interme-
diate educational step when the organizing involves complex, abstract issues or when the
constituency is reluctant to get involved. I believe that Fred Ross is the organizer most re-
sponsible for developing the housemeeting model of organizing.

on the sign-up sheet. Members of the Organizing Committee should make these calls; generally ten calls is a reasonable number to ask someone to make. Responses should be tallied in the appropriate "yes," "no," and "maybe" columns. For purposes of estimating numbers, only the solid "yes" answers are counted. People frequently have a tendency to tell the caller what they think he or she wants to hear, rather than what they actually intend to do. The inexperienced caller often gives "maybes" the benefit of the doubt and overestimates attendance. Accurate turnout predictions for organizational events are critical to successful organizational planning and action. Therefore, precise counting methods should be learned as soon as possible. When predicting turnout, never give a "maybe" the benefit of the doubt.

The timing of these calls also is important. Obviously, the calls will have the maximum impact if made one or two days prior to the big meeting. If earlier calls are desired, then two sets of calls should be made—one about a week before the meeting, and one immediately prior to it, best if done by a different caller. Never make these calls between three and five days before a meeting; this is too early for a final reminder, and too late to allow a second call without being insulting.

The three primary activities that will take place at the first meeting are the election of temporary officers, the ratification of several issue campaigns, and the collection of dues from those who haven't already joined. The Organizing Committee is responsible for planning and preparing for this meeting. Much of this work is done at the last OC meeting, where the final agenda is set, issue campaign recommendations are made, roles for the first meeting are assigned, and elections are discussed. It makes sense to hold temporary elections when the organization first is formed. This minimizes the dangers of the GCO locking into untested and possibly ineffective leadership for a long period of time. Initial elections for a three-month period seem to work very well. This allows sufficient time for the new leadership to be assessed by the other members. After three months have elapsed, new elections are held covering a term of one year.

The organizer does not interfere with the election process, but does make sure that at least one competent person (usually a member of the Organizing Committee) will run for each elected position. Members of the Committee are asked to think about possible nominees, and in turn these people are approached about their willingness to run for office. Of course, there will be an open election with nominations from the floor at the first meeting, but candidates and nominations should be lined up by the Committee in advance.

Similarly, the Committee should decide on several issue campaigns to recommend at the formation meeting. These issues are an outgrowth of the organizing drive and represent problems that a large number of the community members have identified. During the course of the drive, the OC will have done preliminary research on these issues and planned an

initial action strategy. It's important for the new GCO to achieve some success on the first few issues it tackles. Early victories will overcome initial skepticism and help establish the organization's reputation as a winner. Thus, the issues chosen should have broad appeal and handles for a winning strategy.

The Committee also divides up the various leadership roles that must be performed at the first meeting. Someone will chair the meeting, Committee members will present the recommended issue campaigns for approval, and a dues pitch will be made. Other roles include community members who "testify" about the need for organization, as well as volunteers to pass clipboards with sign-up sheets for issue committees. Volunteers will handle tables at the entrance (make sure only one door is used), where dues will be collected, agendas passed out, and attendance sheets signed.

Members of the committee also will assist the organizer in setting up the meeting hall. Ideally, folding chairs will be used with slightly fewer in place than the lowest attendance estimate. This insures that there will be no empty seats—a factor of no small psychological importance. Of course, extra chairs are kept close at hand; setting them up as people stream in helps further the sense that the turnout is better than expected.

The agenda will include the following:

- Welcome by the OC Chair
- The Need to Organize: Guest Speakers, "Testimony" by Community Members
- Presentation and Vote on Issue Campaigns
- Open Discussion on Other Issues
- Collection of Membership Dues
- Nominations and Election of Temporary Officers
- Action Plan and Wrap-up

Often a member of the local clergy may open the meeting with a short prayer and speech about the need to organize. Speakers from other chapters or similar GCOs also can emphasize the importance of organizing and give concrete examples of successful collective action efforts. Testimonials from local Organizing Committee members add considerable spice to the meeting.

Like all organizational meetings, the first one should lead to a clear plan or process for collective action. The format for issue discussions varies in different organizing models. Some favor purely open discussion, while others feature the presentation of an already existing action plan by the Organizing Committee. I prefer structured discussion of the recommen-

dations of the Committee, with a short open-issues forum to follow. Action is confined to the Committee recommendations with other issues referred for future discussion. Rather than announcing the time and place for an action, I lean toward adding a step whereby interested members can attend a committee meeting to finalize strategy. I feel this is both structured and yet participatory; the committee retains control but the new people are integrated so they fully can *own* the issue campaign strategy.

Many people will have paid dues during the organizing drive, while others will pay at the door. Nevertheless, a good explanation of where the dues money goes and how the GCO works is in order. This is followed by a fiery dues pitch. Only those who have paid the dues will be allowed to vote in the elections. Voting for candidates usually is done by hand at first meetings with paid members being issued a small, colored piece of paper to hold up when voting.

The election should be chaired by the visiting GCO member or the organizer. A member of the clergy is an excellent choice to count the votes. Candidates may or may not make speeches, depending on the rules, but they should leave the room while the voting takes place. Officer positions will vary according to structure, but typically include a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary.

Following the meeting, the organizer should visit or contact all those who intended to attend but did not. These "cleanup" visits should be conducted as soon after the meeting as possible in order to capitalize on the momentum created. Having done this, the organizer will have completed the drive, but not the doorknocking. Recruitment never ends, whether it be for action campaigns, fundraising events, or membership drives. So don't knock it—do it!