

Action Circles: Crack the Code to Engage Your Grassroots



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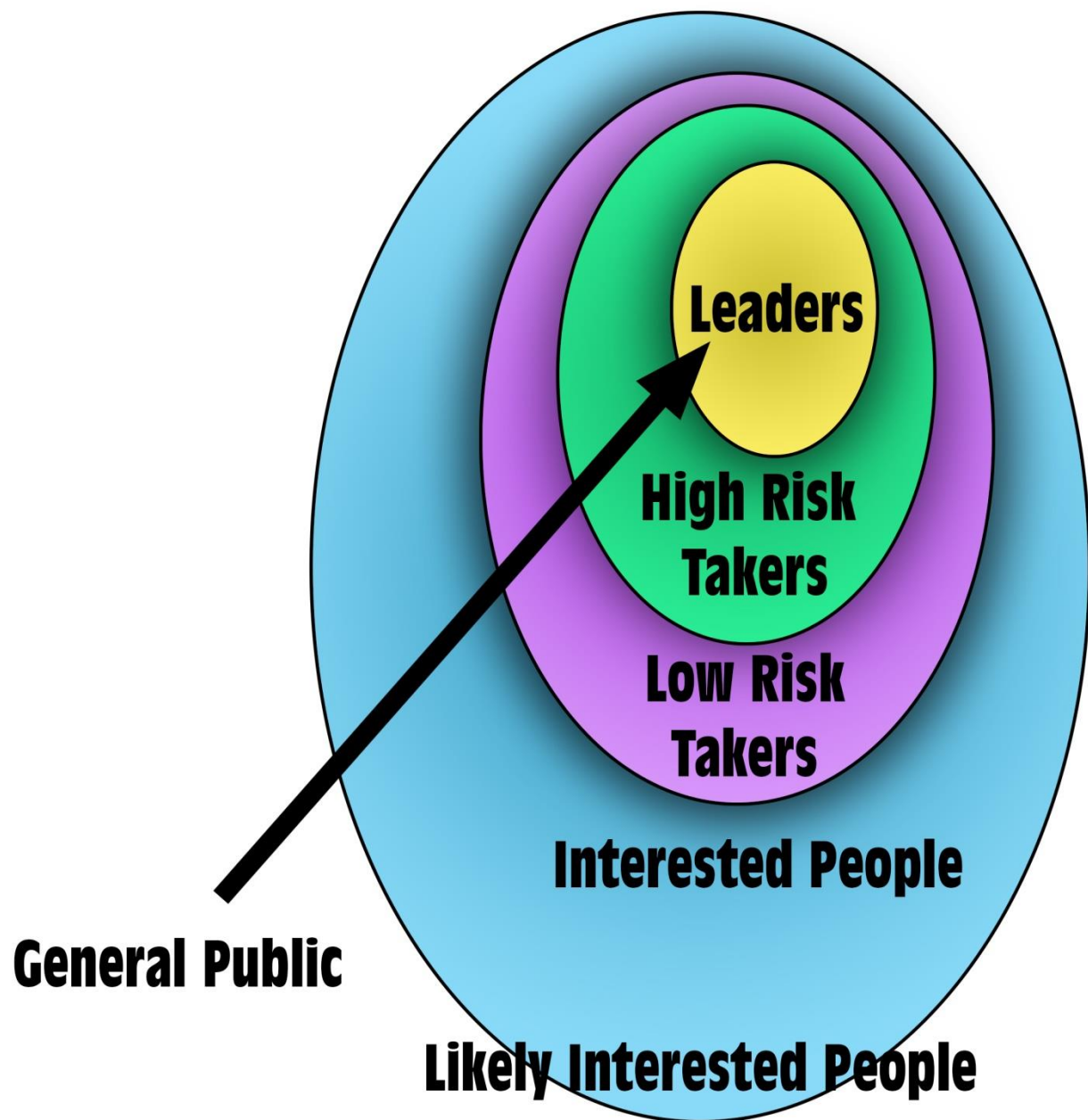
@action_circles

PRINCIPLES OF ACTION CIRCLES ORGANIZING

1. Respect (v. tolerance)
2. Truth (v. fact)
3. Transparency (v. hierarchy)
4. Support (v. education)
5. Accountability (v. blame)
6. Democratic Decision Making (v. exclusion)
7. Movement Building (v. mobilizing)
8. Sharing Power (v. empowering)
9. Solidarity (v. control)
10. Acting from Hope (v. acting from fear)

GOALS OF THE ACTION CIRCLES MODEL OF ORGANIZING

1. Build a strong movement with broad and deep leadership
2. Build solidarity among people who are oppressed or are suffering an injustice
3. Help people identify and use their personal power
4. Provide safety and opportunity for everyone in the group to develop skills and experience
5. Recognize all contributions both privately and publicly
6. Accept everyone's truth as equally valid
7. Offer many opportunities for meaningful participation
8. Use resources for maximum effectiveness
9. Build accountability structures that are non-hierarchical and effective
10. Develop a commitment to democratic principles that is expressed throughout your Organization



Types of Risk Takers



Low Risk Activities usually:

- are not public,
- are relatively easy to do,
- require a short amount of time,
- are easy to tell when you are finished,
- **AND** have clear goals and expectations.



Here are some examples of Low Risk Activities (for some people):

- Light office work – stuffing envelopes, stamping postcards, making copies, collating packets, getting recycled materials ready for re-use (eg, blocking off old addresses on envelopes)
- Creating a display with materials provided by you and clear directions
- Calling people who are already interested in your issue to invite them to an event

List potential Low Risk Activities here:



High Risk Activities often:

- require a *specific skill set* – like talking with the media or cooking food for a meeting.
- might be *public* – like testifying at a public hearing or staffing a table at an event.
- might also *take up a lot of time* – like helping at an all day event, or driving a long distance to give a talk.
- might be *difficult to tell when they are completed*.

Here are some examples of High Risk Activities:

- Calling people to ask them to do something or to ask for donations
- Creating a display from scratch
- Staffing a table at an event
- Talking about a specific topic at an event
- Being interviewed by the media
- Hosting an event at their house

List potential High Risk Activities here:



Leadership Activities always:

- *require specific skills.*
- *are High Risk Activities.*

Leaders must be accountable for their actions. The accountability structure must be clear and agreed upon by the group. **Leaders must know that they are leaders.** Expectations must be clear and agreed upon by both the Leader and the group.

Most of the time, Leaders will be decision-makers of some sort in your group. They might be board members or committee or team leaders of some sort. Or, they might have decision making power on a specific issue or project.

Unlike the other circles, you should be very careful not to allow people to jump into being Leaders if they have not participated in several other activities with your group. Leaders will be more effective if group members know and trust them and have seen the Leaders participating before they take on a leadership role. Also, people are generally less committed to leadership if they have not worked their way into it.

Here are some examples of Leadership Activities:

- Organizing an event
- Facilitating a meeting or a break-out group at a meeting
- Proactively working with the media
- Serving on the Board of Directors
- Chairing a Committee
- Speaking at an event on behalf of the organization
- Supporting a low- or high-risk taker in an activity

List some potential Leadership Activities here:

The Invite-Support-Feedback Loop



Inviting people to TAKE ACTION

Include in your Call to Action:

Invitation to participate:

- Basic information about what is happening and why
 - Don't assume they know
 - Don't include unnecessary details, but give enough context to make sense to a casual, interested person
- Clear reason why/how the action will be effective and meaningful
- Clear reason why "my" action is necessary
- Low risk and high risk action options
 - Make 10 phone calls to invite our supporters to our event with a list and a script
 - Hand out flyers at another event to invite people to our event
 - Volunteer at the event by staffing an information table

Support for taking action:

- All information needed for how to take the action
 - EX: if you are asking the volunteer to make calls to invite your supporters to an event, include:
 - How long the calling will take
 - When the calls need to be made
 - What kind of support they will get
 - Lists, scripts, coaching before calls
- How to get more info or help if needed
 - A real person's name, phone, and email address
 - A website with more information (e.g., if they are being asked to staff a table at an event, perhaps the website has a schedule where they can sign up for a specific shift)

Do NOT expect people to go find information on their own, and do NOT "tease" people with partial information in order to get them to click through to your website. **The action is more important than the click!**

Feedback about the last action or update on the organization:

- What happened because of the last volunteer activity?
- Why are we asking for this action now? How does it help our organization move forward/achieve our goals?

ALWAYS check your invitation/call to action before it is distributed. ASK these questions:

- What is effective about this call to action?
- What might confuse the reader?
- Why might the reader be motivated to take action?
- Are there any barriers?
- What questions will the person have?
- What sort of support is offered? Is any other support needed?
- How could it be a better action alert?
- What if I didn't know anything? Could I participate?