

Making Changes in your Group

short guide



Step 4 : Agree and implement the changes.

Once people have had a chance to get their heads round things it's time to agree the changes. If you haven't already used the group's decision making processes to get this far, now is the time for your group to decide on the changes.

As well as being undemocratic, imposed changes are much more likely to fail. So make sure everyone is involved in deciding not just what needs to change, but also what the group will do to make it happen.

Step 5 : The future

Getting a group to agree to change is only the first step – be persistent. New ideas may take time to settle in and new approaches may not seem to work as well at first. If the agreed changes are significant then it'll help for the group to work out a strategy of how to phase them in in a manageable way. You can do this by agreeing how and when to implement each bit. Build in some review stages to make sure that things are improving and be prepared to adapt the plans if necessary to make things work.

Ever wondered how to introduce a new way of doing things to your group? Think things could be done better, but not sure how to bring the topic up? Seeing room for improvement but not feeling able to help make change happen can be very frustrating – it can lead to groups losing focus on their campaigns and people dropping out.

On the other hand, if your group manages to develop positively then that can help energise you all. Here's a step by step guide to how you can make changes in your group:



Step 1: Ask yourself some questions

First of all, it may be worth asking yourself some questions, like:

- ★ “Does the group really need change?”
- ★ “Will changing the way things are done help the group to become a more effective and inclusive campaign group?”
- ★ “On the other hand, do I want this for personal reasons, even if it won't be too beneficial for the group or its members?”

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Step 2 : Introduce the case for change and listen to the group's responses

After you've asked yourself the kind of questions in step 1, find the time to take your ideas about what might need changing to the group. Don't assume that you'll meet resistance. You may do, but sometimes we create more tension and conflict around change because of the way we approach it.

Resistance to new ideas?

Recognising the reasons for any uneasiness about things changing can help you understand and address them.

Providing time and space for this to happen is essential to helping your group make changes.

Consider some of the more common reasons for resistance to change, and think of ways to overcome these difficulties:

- The group feel they lack the skills to take on new approaches and ideas.
- The group may not see the need – you might have to help people see how they could benefit from change.
- Concerns that new ideas won't work and will end up being a waste of limited group resources.
- Time and energy – people know that they need change but are too busy dealing with the everyday running of the group and campaign activities, even if what you are suggesting would save time in the long run.
- Personal reasons – for example power holders fear that they might become less central to the group if things were done differently, or people who have invested a lot in the current system don't want to lose that.

It may be that just one or two people are wary of change and that many other group members would support it. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to bring the subject into the open – to say what many people have been thinking but have been afraid to say.

Make your case in a clear and fair way, then give people time to think about it. It helps to be positive – the question *What are we doing wrong?* is harder to swallow than *Could we do anything even better?*

For the moment stick to what you think needs to be improved and why, rather than leaping ahead to what you think the solutions are.

You've probably got ideas about how to deal with the problems you've identified, and you can bring them up at the next stage. In the meantime, if the group can be actively involved in working out what needs to change, they're more likely to be committed to finding ways to improve the situation.

Step 3 : Make time and space for discussions

Think about how you can encourage your group to consider the case for changing the way you do things:

- ★ Some people may need to reflect so allow some time and be prepared to take things a step at a time.
- ★ Big changes can be scary, so work out if you need to break the problem down into manageable chunks rather than introducing a lot at once.
- ★ See how everyone else feels – all members of the group should have the opportunity to express their own views and ideas on what should be changed, and how. This is the stage at which you should set out any ideas you have about solutions to the group's problems. Again, don't be impatient – you may have had a while to think about your ideas, but they might be new to others.

