Opportunity, Capacity & Power

Drawing on social movement theory to improve international union campaigns and build union power
**Strategic Campaigning**

Definition: A comprehensive effort to put pressure on key relationships of a company

Aim: to compensate for the power imbalance between capital and labour
Strategic Corporate Research

Basic Tasks:
- identify key relationships
- explore strengths and weaknesses
- provide knowledge base for campaign strategy

Structure:
Many possibilities. Most common is the research template developed by Tom Juravich.
- company
- command & control
- operational (supply and sale)
- outside stakeholder

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Strategy includes ...

“Ground” Strategies
Worker activity & Member mobilization

“Internal” Strategies
Integration of union departments

“Air” Strategies
Launching of general message in public sphere

... campaign activities

Organizing
Bargaining strategy
Union employer relations
Media & communications
Community & issue allies
Political allies & electeds
Strategic research
Capital strategies
Offensive legal

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Missing pieces in current practice

Union campaigns are frequently undertaken without sufficiently:

• Understanding the external context and power dynamics
• Assessing the internal capacity and internal power dynamics of their own organisation
• Understanding the basis for building solidarity
• Analysing the sources of power available

The current strategic campaign system focuses too much on the corporation and its relationship to the environment

• The wider context and internal dynamics need to be integrated into planning
• There is currently no appropriate way to map them and illustrate their potential consequences

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A social movement theory analysis

The operation and chances of a movement’s success depends on a number of interrelated factors:

1. The political opportunity structure (POS) which exists in terms of the openness of the political structures and institutions to the demands and participation of social forces, be they interest groups or social movements

2. Whether a movement has sufficient power and the necessary mobilising and organisational capacity (MOC) to take advantage of structural and situational opportunities where they exist

3. Whether a movement can frame issues in a way that builds wide-spread concern and support for action

Sources of power available to unions include: associative, structural, institutional and discursive power.

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Dimension 1. Mapping the POS

To map the Political Opportunity Structure we need to identify:

- Who controls the policy process? (i.e. decision-makers)
- The alignment of political forces (class interests, political groups, interest groups)
- Availability of ‘elite’ allies
- The formal and informal avenues of access for civil society to decision-makers
- Willingness of state to repress protest Vs its vulnerability to demands

Situational opportunities

- Elections, international meetings, or major policy events that may provide ‘windows of opportunity’
Dimension 2. Mapping MOC

To take advantage of structural opportunities (POS), movements must have sufficient mobilising and organisational capacity (MOC).

This includes:

• Sufficient resources and expertise (enough trained staff, time and money)
• Unified and effective mobilising structures
• Organisational capability
• Integration into networks, coalitions and alliances
Dimension 3. Framing Capabilities

Having opportunity (POS) and capacity (MOC) is not sufficient. Unions must have the capability to ‘frame’ issues in a way that builds solidarity:

- Common understanding of problem
- Shared sense of grievance / injustice
- Target to blame

- Convincing solutions & strategies
- Target to ‘solve’ problem

- Reasons to take action
- Hope for success

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Implications for research

Structural assessment (POS)
• Help understand the broad political and social context – map class interests and power structures
• Identify points for intervention and leverage
• Help identify suitable targets

Self analysis (MOC)
• An realistic assessment of resources needed and available
• A realistic assessment of the state of mobilising structures
• Organisational capability and readiness - internal power dynamics

Identity formation, building solidarity (Framing capability)
• Understand how union members see themselves and how they subjectively understand the issue
• Understand how to build widespread support and solidarity for collective action
• Anticipate divisions and prepare for employer/opposition responses
Where is your Union?

Analysing relative POS & MOC