

## Part 1: Preparation for a training seminar

When planning your political party seminars please keep in mind that most effective trainers are those which utilize the participatory training model. In that model the trainer adopts the role of a facilitator, encouraging interaction and active involvement of the participants through:

- group discussions-both large group and small break out groups;
- probing questions;
- sharing experiences of the participants;
- respecting the knowledge and experience of the participants;
- drawing on the collective wisdom of the group.
- using relevant examples;

The participatory training model functions in the following way:

- everyone must speak and contribute their ideas;
- no one dominates the discussion;
- the facilitator asks a question, goes around the table ensuring that all have an opportunity to participate;
- the facilitator sums up the answers and if possible sums up the consensus in the group.

In order to set the stage for a participatory seminar the room should be arranged in such a way as to encourage discussion. Tables and chairs should be placed in a semi circle or "U" shape so each participant can see one another and have an equal opportunity to participate. The ideal number of participants should be between 15 to 20 people.

The whole group should break into smaller groups for some exercises to allow each person a chance to learn and share experiences. As a practical matter, just before you start the first small group exercise, divide the participants into small groups of 3 to 5 people. These groups will work together for the small group exercises throughout the day. This will give everyone a chance to talk and participate in the group. A spokesperson should be identified to report back to the larger group.

There are several different techniques to break people into groups. One way is to simply number people off-say if you want 4 groups go around the room starting with the first person being number one, next person two and so on. Each number one is group one; the two's are the next group; the three's are the next group and so on.

Or it may be useful to break into groups for each branch office, etc. Care should be taken that each group has a balance in terms of gender, age and experience.

### Have on hand:

- flip chart paper or large paper to record people's ideas;
- Marking pens—it is always fun to have colored pens to liven up the room;
- Materials: sufficient copies of questionnaires, voter logs and instruction forms for all participants. [see appendix]
- Agenda [see appendix]

### Part 2: Introductions

Time: 15 minutes

Trainers should introduce themselves to the group. Then go around the room and have each person introduce themselves in two or three sentences—who they are; what they do and their role within the party. Try to make this informal and create a relaxed atmosphere. If people do not know each other, have everyone make large nametag using paper folded over and place the nametag before them on their table. Review the agenda with people and ask for suggestions, changes etc. Explain to people that the seminar is designed to have everyone participating and **encourage people to do so and to ask questions**. There is no such thing as a wrong or foolish question.

### Part 3: Volunteers

Why are you in the business of politics? Because you believe that your party can govern better than the other political parties. You want to win the next election. The real task is how? Elections are not won or lost in the four weeks leading up to an election but in the work that your party does between elections. It is about talking to people about local issues, helping people and showing that you can listen and represent people in a meaningful way. **Simply put you must earn each vote**. That will happen if people see that your party is different and committed to being a part of the community, a party that listens to and cares about the community.

In order to do that, we need volunteers. Political parties and election campaigns are fueled by volunteers. You can never have too many volunteers. A successful branch office should have enough volunteers to enable the party to personally talk to everyone in the electoral district. But who are volunteers and where do you find them?

**Exercise 1 - Large Group Exercise:**

**Time: 10 minutes**

☞ *Go around the room and ask the large group: Who is a volunteer/Why are volunteers important?*

☞ *Write responses from individuals in the group on the flipchart paper.*

✓ **Purpose:**

*To have everyone understand how important volunteers are and that volunteers come from a number of different places and may not necessarily be party members.*

Some typical responses may be:

- Person who works for free
- she/he does not have to be party members
- an individual who is committed to change in his or her community and country
- interested in a continuing education process
- looking for an opportunity to meet new people who share similar ideas, to socialize and have fun

Volunteers are the most important resource that a political party has. They need to be respected and cultivated if your party is to succeed. Key elements of any volunteer is one who is committed to the party; confident in the work they do and courageous enough to ensure it gets accomplished.

☞ **Trainers should keep in mind:**

*People volunteer their time for a variety of reasons but they all share the essential one feature: that is they are not paid for their work. It is therefore always important to thank volunteers for everything they do, no matter how little. In addition, if you can ask volunteers what they like to do and utilize their skills it will make them feel more useful. As in any team, people like to feel included; they want to feel that their work is important. For if they do, then they will for sure return and*

*with luck bring their family and friends.*

*Reinforce with the group that it is always important to:*

- ✓ *always say "thank-you" to a volunteer.*
- ✓ *always listen to volunteers*
- ✓ *always make them feel useful and important*
- ✓ *always make them feel a part of the plan*
- ✓ *always try to have them work in areas they are interested in.*

#### **Part 4: Stepping out - Getting over the fear**

As we already said, if you want to win elections you have to talk to people about local issues, helping people and showing that you can listen and represent people in a meaningful way. You want to show people that your party is different and committed to being a part of the community, a party that listens to and cares about the community. **Simply put you must earn each vote.**

One effective way to do this is to create a citizen questionnaire on local issues and take it door to door. To do this, your party needs volunteers. Volunteers are the heart and soul of your party.

Trainers should make sure that everyone in the room has a copy of your questionnaire. Ask everyone to take a good look at it. Explain that their task is to take this questionnaire to door to door. Check their reactions - a normal response may be terror or at least some misgivings!

#### **Exercise 2 : Large Group exercise**

*Time: 10 minutes*

- ☞ *Go around the room and ask individuals: "What were your first thoughts when you were asked to go door to door? What were your initial reservations, or concerns?"*
- ☞ *Have the group relate some of their initial fears about the questionnaire and taking it door to door.*
- ☞ *Write responses on the flipchart.*

#### **Purpose:**

- ✓ *To help the group acknowledge their concerns and not simply ignore them.*
- ✓ *To have them start thinking of ways to overcome their fears.*

#### **Tip for trainers:**

*In training others it is always important to stand back and think about what you felt when it was suggested that you were to do something new such as to go door to door with a citizen questionnaire. Remember that new volunteers will have the same*

*reservations and concerns that you had. Therefore you must help your volunteers identify their concerns and think about how to overcome their reservations. Be sure to talk about your own experiences and reactions when you were first confronted with the prospect of going door to door.*

Here are some initial reactions that others in your party have had when first asked to go door to door. These are the same concerns that volunteers elsewhere have had : from Calgary to Sydney to Virginia to Belfast. These are universal, normal ordinary everyday concerns.

- ☹ The trainer must be crazy!!
- ☹ We cannot do that
- ☹ We have never done that before
- ☹ We are a serious political party, not pizza delivery boys or Jehovah Witnesses!
- ☹ It cannot be done here.
- ☹ What reaction will we get at the doors?
- ☹ Who is going to help me?
- ☹ People will be rude to me - they will curse and yell at me.
- ☹ I am scared to go to the door - I could get hurt.
- ☹ Are you kidding?

### Part 5: How to motivate volunteers

The above concerns will be same for your volunteers. How did you handle your concerns? What did you do to overcome those concerns?

In order to help your volunteers overcome their concerns they should understand that the questionnaire is **important for the party**. This fact will help convince people that they need to find the courage to go door to door. The **importance of the task** will always be an essential **motivating factor**.

While importance of the task is one motivating factor, there are many others. It is a useful exercise to find out from the small group what motivates them and others to become volunteers. This will develop an appreciation for the work they will undertake for the party.

#### Exercise 3: Small Group exercise

Time: 20 minutes

- ☞ *Break into small groups. These groups will work together throughout the day.*
- ☞ *Have each small group make a list of 7 factors which would motivate you as a volunteer to go door to door*

#### Purpose:

- ✓ *To have the work group develop list of factors that will motivate them as volunteers to participate in a door to door canvass;*
- ✓ *To have the group understand the value of a questionnaire; and the benefits it brings to the party.*

Here is a list of factors that motivated other party volunteers to go door to door. Some will be the same and some different for each group. Use this list as a guidepost for when the small groups report back to ensure that some common themes for volunteer motivating factors are brought out.

- ☺ The party needs to know what people think about local issues;
- ☺ To increase membership in the party;
- ☺ Opportunity for people to meet our party directly;
- ☺ Opportunity for the party to "win" new voters;
- ☺ Opportunity to distinguish our party from other parties - to do something new.
- ☺ To let people know that their help is welcomed and appreciated;
- ☺ To have our volunteers gain new experiences;
- ☺ Making a personal contribution to democracy - "I should do it"
- ☺ To recruit new volunteers and supporters of the party;
- ☺ Opportunity for volunteers to work with those party leaders who understand the importance of going door to door;
- ☺ To test party policies;
- ☺ To do politics differently; to practice democracy;
- ☺ To demonstrate that the party is serious;
- ☺ To show that our councilors are interested in everyday problems of your community;
- ☺ To make our local councilors better informed to do their job;
- ☺ To develop a good party organization;
- ☺ To develop lines of communication between the party and the voter;
- ☺ To make people believe that what they are doing is important and that they are important.
- ☺ To involve volunteers and party members in the activities of the party;
- ☺ Opportunity for volunteers to meet and work with the leadership of the party.

***Reporting back from small groups***

***Time: 5 minutes per group***

- ☞ ***Each group should report back to the larger group and place its list of seven factors to motivate volunteers on the wall.***
- ☞ ***As each successive group reports, they should only report on what is new or different from the previous group.***