Growing Your Grassroots

Holding Effective 1:1s
When it comes to growing your movement to end student hunger, there is no substitute for direct person-to-person relationships. Personal relationships and shared experiences establish the strongest bonds and provide the most compelling incentive for students or campus administration to get involved in your movement. One-on-ones (often written as 1:1s) are a foundational tool to grow your organization, develop new student leaders, gain champions in school administration, and maintain relationships with active members.

**Conducting 1:1s**

1:1 meetings are pre-scheduled meetings with a member or prospective member to discuss the organization, make plans for the work ahead, or debrief completed actions. A successful 1:1 meeting ends with a commitment to take action that includes a specific date, time, and goal.

1:1s are not scripted meetings with agendas, but rather a chance for you to establish a deeper connection with the student, admin, or anyone who can join your movement. Although the conversations should be relaxed, you should come prepared to ask questions that lead the conversation in a productive way.

Examples of these questions are as follows:
- How did you get involved in this issue?
- What do you hope to accomplish in the short-term and/or long-term?
- What organizations are you involved with, if any?
- What are ways you were hoping to be involved?
- What do you want to learn?
- Who else do you think I should talk to?
- What do you think it would take to win?
- What kind of support do you need to accomplish your goals?
- What are special interests or skills you could contribute?
Follow-Ups
After your conversation, the follow-up is the most important part of 1:1s. Timely follow-ups can make a huge difference in your relationship-building. Here are some steps you can take to make sure you get the most out of your 1:1 follow-ups:

**Expressing Gratitude:** Write thank you notes, send emails, or make follow-up thank you calls.

**Reinforcing Commitments:** Follow up with reminders about commitments made during 1:1 and monitor progress to those goals.

**Keep Promises:** During your 1:1 meeting, keep a list of any commitments you make. Make sure to fulfill these commitments in a timely manner. Relationships are built on trust: you build trust as an organizer when you keep the commitments you make to supporters.

**Deepen the Relationship:** Add introductory 1:1 supporters to your email lists and social networks. Call them periodically to check in and ask them for help in future endeavors.
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Keep Them Coming Back
We've all been there – the ineffective community service experience. You roll up your sleeves, get excited to pitch in, and you're met with cold shoulders, a lack of direction, and no follow-up. You might be passionate about the issue or the people you were there to help, but the negative experience outweighs your passions and you never come back.

While no one ever strives to provide that experience, it can be easy to fall into that cycle. On top of all your other responsibilities, team management and retention can come as an afterthought – but it is one of the most important factors in growing your movement to end student hunger.

With a few simple steps below, you can make sure your team, both students and administrators, remain committed. Ensure that they not only come back for more, but step up their dedication and responsibilities to your work.

1. **Make sure the person's first experience is a rewarding one:** Train them thoroughly before they begin their task, explain how it fits into the campaign plan, and take the time to answer any questions they have. Give them ongoing direction and lots of positive feedback. Most importantly, give them a job that is set up for success.

2. **Listen to input.** Student team members add a lot of value to your work, including being a good source of feedback. They are especially skilled at giving suggestions and constructive criticism. Ask them what your group can do better and take their answers seriously.

3. **Make ample use of thank you notes and organization newsletters.** The more the students feel appreciated and connected to the effort, the more you will see of them. You'll never regret sending a thank you note.

*List adapted from Lofy, B. (2005). Politics the Wellstone way: how to elect progressive candidates and win on issues. Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press*
4 **Maintain consistent communication with students.** Continuity is important. People often feel more comfortable when they consistently interact with the same person or people. It also allows the team coordinator to keep better track of student members and how they can help the campaign the most.

5 **Empower a strong team member to become a strong leader.** The key to organizing is always getting people to take on more: more work and more responsibility. Team members can recruit and coordinate other students, constantly expanding the group’s base.

**BEWARE Reasons Your Teammates Won’t Return**

1 **They are not clear why they are doing what they are doing.** Someone who has not worked with your team before may not understand why a campaign is making phone calls or doing a big mailing. Campaigns need to explain clearly how a member’s work fits into a plan to win.

2 **They choose to do something else with their time.** Getting people to take time out of their busy lives means making the campaign a high priority. That will only happen if they feel good about participating.

3 **Team members are overburdened.** The goal is to keep students coming back, not to burn them out quickly.

4 **They are not reminded that they signed up and nobody asked.** The campaign should always follow-up to remind them they signed up to participate, via phone calls or email reminders.

5 **They are not recognized or appreciated.** Everyone wants to be appreciated, especially when they are making a sacrifice to do something impactful. Think of creative ways to thank people.

There are rare times when your group would prefer that a team member not return. Some people can be disruptive or not particularly helpful. In those cases and particularly when other team members are deterred by the presence of a difficult member, your group should respectfully ask the person not to come back.

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Leadership Development for Team Members
We are not just bringing together allies to do work, we are growing a movement – and movements require leadership development. There is no better pool of leader candidates than your team. But how do you know which team members will blossom into leaders? Who even wants to be a leader? And who will be a good leader?

Before you get started, here are three things to keep in mind:

1. **There’s a big difference between a team member and a leader:**
   Team members want to do things. They want to play a part, meet a need, and have fairly clear responsibilities. Leaders want to lead things. They want to be a part of the decision-making process and have more authority. Some groups think they have a member problem, but in reality, it’s a leadership issue. There are plenty of people to do the work, but not enough people to lead the work. Other groups have a lot of leaders, but nobody to do the real day-to-day work. Your goal is to have a balance of each.

2. **Many team members don’t want to be leaders.**
   Some people are very comfortable staying in the non-leader lane. If you try and give them more leadership and authority, they shrink back or push away. This has nothing to do with their commitment to the issue. It’s just that some people are wired, and only have the capacity, to be team members and not leaders. You can develop some people into leadership positions, but trying to force leadership roles on everyone can be a mistake.

3. **Leadership development takes time.**
   You can’t rush leadership development. This can be frustrating because there is so much work to do and so many opportunities, but if you want to develop leaders, you’re going to have to be patient and guide them through the process.
Five Steps You Can Take to Turn Team Members Into Leaders

With the above principles as the backdrop, let’s talk about five things you can do this week to begin the process of turning some team members into leaders.

1. Identify your potential leaders.
   Even though your group might be growing really fast, you might realize you don’t have many good systems for developing people into leaders. Grab a whiteboard and answer the question: “Who are the potential leaders in our group?” Write several names down (you might realize you are making a list of hard-working members). Few of these people will be natural leaders. Some will prefer to do the work themselves and stay members; they worked hard, but they didn't have followers or build teams – take them off the list. Take the list of remaining leaders and follow the steps below.

2. Have “I see in you” conversations.
   One of the best ways to call out potential in people is to go up and tell them what you see in them. It’s a conversation that might go something like this: “Hey Sarah. You are absolutely one of the friendliest people I’ve met. I honestly think it’s a gift. You have this way of making people feel welcomed and relaxed. It’s like you’re on the lookout for people who need a smile. I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about this before, but that’s something we really need here at Swipe Out Hunger.” You don’t have to give the hard sell or hand out a membership application. You’re simply saying what you see. You’re looking into someone’s life and speaking a positive truth. Calling out the potential in people is an amazing thing you can do for someone, and you can do it today.

3. Put them on your calendar.
   You can’t effectively equip people to do the work by just sending emails or posting TikToks. You’re going to have to have conversations with people. Leadership development takes time and intentionality. So once you have a list of a few potential leaders, make sure they are on your calendar. This is not very complicated, but it’s going to require a little bit of focus and planning.
Coffee conversations and lunches with people, whether in person or on Zoom, are really important (check out the section on holding 1:1s). Don’t feel like these are diversions from the real work. Recruiting leaders is also very different from recruiting members. You can’t recruit leaders from the stage or with a sign-up sheet.

**Ask questions.**
When you have conversations with potential leaders, you’ll definitely have an opportunity to talk and teach. But one of the most important things you can do is ask questions. Leaders love to share their opinion and you have an incredible opportunity to learn from their insights.

Here are some questions you can ask potential leaders:
- What do you think we can do better?
- What do you think are some of our biggest opportunities?
- How can we better serve your friends, fellow students, and the community?
- What are the biggest needs in our community?
- Who should I get to know on our campus? Who would you like to know in our group or school?

**Delegate results, not just tasks.**
You might find there’s an opportunity for a new leader to get involved once you have identified this potential leader, spent time with them, and learned from them. While you should start small, you must also give away responsibility and not just a to-do list. This is one of the biggest differences between a member and a leader. Team members may love the to-do list, but leaders often hate it.

If you want to involve a problem-solving leader, get on the same page, but then get out of the way. Let them make decisions and take action.