



C4AA Fundamentals #2: Building a Creative Campaign

Helpful terms

Using the landscape as a metaphor...

The Goal is a broad, idealistic idea of where we want to be. Utopia, Shangri-La. We may never arrive, but it gives us a point on the horizon that can orient the direction of our work.

Objectives are measurable steps along the way toward the goal. Milestones by which we can measure our progress.

Strategy is the path we choose to travel toward the objectives. How we navigate the terrain, the way we avoid obstacles, and how we determine the most direct path.

Tactics are the steps we take along the way. The individual actions that move us toward our objectives. Some examples could be events, meetings, email blasts, individual conversations, policy changes, etc. Tactics are the most visible manifestation of campaigns, so it's often the first thing we think of when we think of changing culture. But tactics work best when oriented within a campaign.

Tips for creating objectives

Make 'em SMART

You may already be familiar with SMART Objectives. They're used in management and business simply because they work so well. Essentially it's a checklist ensuring your objective can later inspire the best strategies and tactics from your group. Doing this now will save time in committee meetings later – and who doesn't want better, more productive meetings?

- *Specific* – target a specific area for improvement.
- *Measurable* – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- *Achievable* – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- *Relevant* – make sure your objective leads toward your goal
- *Time-based* – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

via [wikipedia](#)

Assume you'll be successful

When discussing your objectives, stay focused on the goal instead of the challenges. There will certainly be obstacles to our objectives (and one informs the other) but obstacles will be addressed more fully when you strategize. Make no mistake, obstacles are real, but organizing around what you *can't* do will not get us as far as organizing around where we want to be.

This may feel counter-intuitive for some, especially us artists and academics whose careers can be built around calling ideas into question and “problematizing”. Those skills are valuable, but only when brought into play at the right times.

Don't get lost in *how* (for now)

It's easy to go down a rabbit hole of ideas on how these things will get accomplished. It's natural. When we start creating milestones for what we want to achieve, our brains kick in with ways we can move from where we are now to where we want to be. This is why we want good objectives – they inspire good strategies and tactics! Make notes when tactical ideas come up, but then return to the task at hand: a list of clear and measurable objectives.

Data works in service of the goal

We can use stats to hold us accountable. They can help us know when we've reached an objective. They give us a way to measure our progress along the way so we can revise and adjust our plans. They can help us get a more accurate picture of what's happening and develop ideas accordingly.

But remember, data isn't just stats – you can decide the metrics you use measure. For example, there are ways we can measure tone: what's said or not said in meetings, number of smiles, emails received saying thank you, topics brought up in public conversations, etc. These metrics may be more subjective or less accurate, but at the same time they help fill out a fuller picture. Deciding our metrics also requires creativity.

So what do you do?

Start big: what are your, or your organization's goals. Don't be afraid to be Utopian; this is the place. Goals guide us and give us direction, objectives are the realistic milestones we'll achieve to get there.

If you're an artist working with an organization, ask what their objectives are. Often, you can use a creative strategy to help come up with effective tactics they wouldn't have dreamed of. If they don't have articulated objectives or goals, help them craft some!

If you're working independently, look at how organizations who are working on similar campaigns are structuring their work. Borrow from their structures.

When brainstorming creative interventions, or tactics, always ask yourself (and others): if the tactic succeeds what do we want to have happen? and for whom? and how this will move us toward our objectives

And what not to do?

Don't think of the framework as confining, think of it as supporting. You're the soloist playing over a sixteen bar structure.

Don't mistake the most visible aspects of the practice for the practice itself. Isolated tactics don't often work and when they do, it's because of luck. When people think of "activism," they often recall various tactics - a march, a petition, a sit-in - and not the cultural context or campaign structure that led to them. And then they "do activism" by simply repeating those tactics out of their original context with diminishing returns. This is another reason why creativity is required to be effective.

Good Luck!

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