

THE • CENTER • FOR ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

Impossible Tactics Brainstorm Tool

Tactics are the basic unit of activism. They're the actions and interventions we stage and the pieces we create for people to see, hear, experience — and that move them to take action. Through our tactics, we move closer to achieving our objectives.

An important note about tactics: there's no one-size-fits-all "good tactic." Developing great tactics means carefully considering the **context** in which they will exist, how they **engage** your audience(s) and **make sense** to them, and whether they **challenge expectations** enough to be noticeable and memorable.

EXERCISE: Making the Impossible Possible

20 min

One of our most useful exercises, Making the Impossible Possible, can quickly generate dozens of ideas, helping you find innovative tactics to use in your campaign.

- 1) **Choose one of your SMARTIE objectives.** Make sure your audience and outcome are clear. (See Steps 1 and 2 if you haven't defined these yet.)
- 2) Get a timer ready and plan to **brainstorm 10 tactic ideas in 10 minutes** (yes — that comes down to one per minute). Remember, your tactics are actions (not outcomes) that help you achieve the objective.

IMPORTANT: The first seven tactics you write down *must* be impossible. Meaning you don't have the budget, number of volunteers, or time to pull it off. Beyond that, they could be wildly unpopular or unethical, break the laws of physics, cost billions. They could require 10,000 sandwiches, alien technology, singing dragons (or all three). **The more weird, outlandish, and fun, the better!** These tactics should not magically solve the problem (e.g., not "Glenda the Good Witch waves her wand and our objective is achieved") but should involve

impossible actions that move your campaign forward to victory — “Glenda takes your city council on a mind-expanding tour of the enchanting public housing within the Emerald City of Oz.”

After you come up with the seven impossible ideas, you can come up with three possible ones.

Don't overthink it — just get your ideas written down. And give yourself a bonus point for every extra idea you can write down after the tenth.

- 3) At the end of your 10 minutes, **review your ideas**. If you divided into groups, share with each other.
- 4) Then, give yourself a few minutes to **make the impossible possible**. Pick one impossible idea you're excited about. What are ways you can make it possible? Can you keep the essence and do it on a smaller scale? Temporarily? Using costumes, models, or props? Or within the context of a video? Did your impossible tactic involve carrying people to the polls on those singing dragons? Make it possible with a dragon-painted bus and a karaoke machine!
- 5) Repeat this with a few more of your “impossible” ideas, to generate at least 5-10 more possible ideas — and **watch the possibilities for your campaign expand**.

In a short time you generated 15-20 ideas for tactics. Don't worry — they're not all supposed to be winners, or even feasible. But when there's at least one with potential that excites you, then you've made an important step forward.

You might be wondering: **why does this impossible-possible brainstorming method work?** It works because:

- Starting with the impossible opens up options that would otherwise be shut down by practical thinking, and
- Having to generate so many ideas in a short time means less overthinking and self-editing, and more tapping into the unconscious and unexpected.

This exercise is part of our soon-to-be-released **Creative Campaign Toolkit**, coming November 2023. **If you'd like to get a full toolkit, [join the C4AA newsletter community](#) to be the first to know when it's released.**