

Axioms for Organizers by Fred Ross, Sr. 1989

Every Day – Organizing isn't a job done once and done with. If organizers don't renew their efforts every day of their lives, then only the grasping and greedy people remain active.

Doing It "For" People – If you think you can do it for people, you've stopped understanding what it means to be an organizer.

Lead By Pushing – An organizer is a leader who does not lead but gets behind the people and pushes.

Duty of Organizer – The duty of the organizer is to provide people with the opportunity to work for what they believe in.

Follow-up – 90% of organizing is follow-up.

Never Give Up – Good organizers never give up – they get the opposition to do that.

Urgency – A good organizer must be able to charge an issue with a supreme sense of urgency.

"From The Heart" – How can you move others unless you are moved yourself?

Little Things – If you are able to achieve anything big in life, it's because you paid attention to the "little" things.

Half-Assed Job – In any kind of work if you do a half-assed job at least you get some of the work done; in organizing you don't get anything done.

People – It's the way people are that counts, not the way you'd like them to be.

Short-Cuts – Short-cuts usually end in detours, which lead to dead ends.

Organizing Is – Organizing is providing people with the opportunity to become aware of their own capabilities and potential.

Hope – To inspire hope, you have to have hope yourself.

Winning Hearts & Minds – to win the hearts and minds of people, forget the dry facts and statistics; tell them the stories that won you to the cause.

Questions – When you are tempted to make a statement, ask a question.

Temporary Organizer – An organizer tries to turn each person she meets into a temporary organizer.

Ask #1 – Don't tell the people – ask them.

Build New – Don't try and rebuild a dead organization; start over and build a new one.
(Cesar Chavez)

Organizing or Manipulating? – If you are moving people to act through truth and for truth, as you understand it, then you are organizing them. If you are moving them to act through deception, then you are manipulating them.

Do It Now #1 – If there is something to be done, do it now.

Do It Now #2 – If you wait until you have all the time, people and resources to go ahead, you may still never get there because you didn't fill the interval with the action needed to get you there.

Winning & Losing People – It's easy to win people – and twice as easy to lose them

Losers – Losers are loaded with alibis.

Maybe – “Maybe” is a double, triple “No!”

Messages #1 – Rare is the delivered message.

People Power – People power must be visible.

Reminding – Reminding is the essence of organizing.

Organize – The only way to organize is to organize, not sit around and jaw about it.

Burn-Out – Organizers don't “burn-out”, they just give up and cease being organizers.

Pressure – It's not the quantity of pressure we exert that counts, it's the quality.

Willpower #1 – There is no substitute for willpower in an organizer.

Ask #2 – Usually those who can spare a little time for the cause are actually ready to give it all if only someone would ask them.

Concentration – When you are pushing a big drive or issue, you stay on it to the total exclusion of everything else – until it is done.

Live Wires – When you find “live-wires” put them to work immediately. Find something they can do – any little thing – get them started and ready to do more, or you’ll lose them for the cause.

All the Way – When you do something – do it all the way!

Leadership – You don’t develop new leaders, you push people into taking action by refusing to do it yourself. You are then providing them the opportunity to become aware of their own capabilities.

Willpower #2 – An organizer has to want to win badly enough to succeed.

Volunteers – Never get so hungry for volunteers that you do their work for them instead of insisting they do it themselves.

Hardest Choice – The hardest choice is usually the correct one.

Vacations – Injustice never takes a vacation.

Monotony – the way to break monotony is with motion and emotion.

Appreciation #1 – Appreciation has an exceedingly short memory so strike while the iron is hot.

Appreciation #2 – People are infinitely more appreciative of what they do for you than what you do for them. (Cesar Chavez)

Respect Yourself – Don’t let them kick you around. You have to live and organize, in such a way that you can respect yourself and be treated with respect by others.

Put People To Work – Don’t talk at people – put them to work.

The Disrupter – The disrupter is the lowest form of organizational life.

Be Ready – A good organizer delegates responsibility but is always ready to jump in and do the job himself if necessary. (Saul Alinsky 1947)

Social Arsonist – A good organizer is a social arsonist who goes around setting people on fire.

Messages #2 – There is nothing less likely to be delivered than a message.

Reaching People – If you can't catch people at home during ordinary hours, you've got to go after them during extra-ordinary hours, to the outer edge of your tenacity and forbearance.

Brick By Brick – It isn't hard to organize if you take it granule by granule, brick by brick.

Fast Talkers – Look out for the fast talkers.

Details – The measure of a good organizer is the amount of attention she pays to the most minute details.

Helping People – Organizers must grow beyond helping people to “egging them on.”

A Time For Silence – There is a time for sound and a time for silence and a good organizer needs to be able to differentiate between the two.

Finding That Person – To keep an organization alive you've got to find that person who has to do something about it.

The Incidentals – The incidentals make up the fundamentals.